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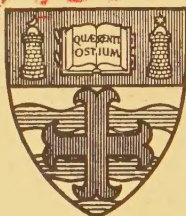
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L E N I N

*A Biography*

*By the same Author*

PEOPLE OF THE STEPPES  
STORMING HEAVEN

# L E N I N

*A Biography*

by

RALPH FOX

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*Part I*

# THE FIRST STEPS

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## CHAPTER I

### CHILDHOOD

LENIN'S parents were representative of what was good in the Russian middle class in the 1860's. Devoted to their work, liberal-minded, disinterested, sober in living, they were far removed from either the aristocratic neurasthenia that characterised the intellectuals among the nobility, or the narrow greed of the merchant and capitalist classes. Ilya Nikolaivich Ulyanov, Lenin's father, was the son of a poor tailor at Astrakhan. The tailor died when Ilya was quite young, leaving his family unprovided for. Ilya was able to finish his school and enter the university entirely owing to the devotion of his elder brother Basil, who, though he himself longed for education, gave up all dreams of the university and learning, entered an office in the town, and supported the family on his earnings.

Basil's devotion nearly proved fruitless, for the authorities refused to give a scholarship to Ilya since he was the son of a tradesman and not a member of the Chinese hierarchy of Russian officialdom. But Basil was determined—determination was a feature of the family—and, by what unheard-of sacrifices on his part we shall never know, Ilya was entered at Kazan University, where he partly supported himself by giving private lessons. Here he studied mathematics and physics, and in 1855, on finishing his course, became senior physics master at the Penza Nobles' Institute.

The institute was a bad one, though it served a vast district, and the noblemen of Penza were a particularly corrupt and indolent crowd, even for mid-nineteenth century Russia. It was a centre of reaction, and at the time of the emancipation of the serfs in 1860-61 the noblemen of Penza signified their disapproval by starting great incendiary fires. For Lenin's father, however, residence among them became bearable through his scientific interests, for he was made controller of meteorological observations for the province, a post of some importance in agricultural Russia and one which he filled with distinction. Nevertheless, he was glad when the opportunity came to move to yet another of the great Volga towns, to Nizhni-Novgorod, particularly as he was anxious to marry. His young wife, Maria Alexandrovna Blank, whom he married in 1863, was a girl of some beauty and much character. She was the daughter of a doctor of German descent who had tired of practice and bought a small estate in the country near Kazan, where he lived a retired, spartan-like existence. His daughter had a hard upbringing, with neither friends nor amusements, her only education received from her father and two old German aunts who taught her music and languages. By her own efforts, however, she passed the examination for elementary school teachers, and was preparing herself for this vocation when she met and married Ilya Ulyanov.

They were a happy couple, and two persons of such training and character were bound to go forward, not swiftly and sensationally, but firmly and wisely. Ilya was made inspector of primary schools in the province of Simbirsk in 1869, and in that year moved to this typical "nest of gentlefolks" on the high bank of the Volga. Like Penza, Simbirsk was a typical island of reactionary country squires and narrow, semi-Asiatic bureaucrats, in a sea of dark-minded peasantry. There seems no doubt that in going to such an unpromising place from a great commercial centre like Nizhni-Novgorod, Ulyanov was moved by the wave of enlightenment and education then sweeping

over the best of the Russian intelligentsia. The "march to the people" of the advanced intellectuals and radically minded nobles like Tolstoy was beginning, and was taking precisely the apparently harmless form of a great enthusiasm for the education of the peasantry. Village schools and libraries were opening everywhere—of very varying quality, to be sure, but for a determined man there was big work to be done, and there is no doubt that Ilya Ulyanov succeeded triumphantly in organising elementary education for the peasants of Simbirsk, so well indeed that in 1874 he was appointed director of elementary schools for the whole province.

In Simbirsk on April 22nd, 1870, a few months after the young Ulyanov couple had moved there, their second son, Vladimir Ilyich, was born. Lenin was like his father; the same pronounced cheek-bones and deep-set eyes, the same high-domed forehead, the same firmly set mouth and determined chin. His elder brother, the tragic Alexander, was good-looking, like his mother, with none of the typically Russian, typically Volga features of Lenin and their father, Ilya Nikolaivich.

The two elder Ulyanov boys were far from ordinary, but Vladimir certainly was no unpleasant youthful "genius." He never, like so many intellectual revolutionaries in both politics and literature, gave way to fits of subjective moodiness, and his home life was an exceedingly happy one. He was fond of all the games common to Russian boys; tobogganing, skating, and ski-ing; while in summer, as a boy, he enjoyed the polite nineteenth-century pastime of croquet, which even after three revolutions and many wars still retains a certain place among Russian recreations.

But Vladimir was a boy of extraordinarily active and lively imagination. When the family moved out to the village in the summer and the grown-ups went off into the woods at night to hunt, he would try to follow them, stealing away into the deeper darkness on the edge of the forest, to be discovered at last and sent home. With his friends he enjoyed playing at bandits and robbers, acting the heroic



adventures of the impossibly exciting life of boyhood everywhere.

All those who remember him as a boy emphasise his extraordinary liveliness, his inexhaustible fund of stories and jokes. He liked teasing, not only his child friends, but grown-ups as well. Like all middle-class children, the Ulyanovs learned to play the piano, and forgot the art as soon as they went to school. But Vladimir's little brother Mitya was very sensitive, and could never sing through the song of "The Kid" without breaking down in tears. Volodya used to get him to summon up his manhood and sing the song, and as soon as Mitya reached the place where the grey wolves fall upon the kid—the danger-spot in the tragedy—he would join in with terrible mock pathos. This always proved too much for Mitya, who would at once break down in tears.

At school Volodya made no particular friends, but was on good terms with all. Boys generally, with or without approval of their masters, organise their work collectively, and none is more hated than the clever boy who refuses to share his knowledge, and help those who lag behind him, who hoards his scholastic virtue for the purpose of winning certificates and prizes, gaining the good will of the authorities and the best posts or scholarships on leaving school. There was nothing of this type of schoolboy capitalist about the young Ulyanov. His work came to him easily, and just as easily he shared his knowledge with his fellows, helping them in their preparation. Nor did this prevent him from winning a gold medal on leaving school.

For, while still a boy, Vladimir Ilyich showed that extraordinary diligence and application in mastering every problem that life put before him that later was to be his most distinguishing feature as a leader and inspirer of men. When the theme of an essay was given to the class, he carefully drew up his plan, then took paper, and down the left-hand side wrote the rough outline of his essay, according to the plan. On the right-hand side day after day he made additions, notes on new sources,

references to literature, and so on. Finally, on clean paper, he wrote his last draft of the essay, using all the material which he had gathered and so carefully worked out.

This boy of sixteen, short and rather thin, with his unusually domed forehead, the strong, ironical mouth, was very far from ordinary. He was not good-looking, like his elder brother Sasha, but he was much more talkative and lively, in a sharp, sarcastic way. His was no dreamy adolescence. He had many active interests, spending long hours of the hot summer months in fishing, in bird-snaring, in reading in the orchard of the little summer farmhouse which was the property of the Ulyanovs. In winter he skated and went for long ski-runs through the forests, experimented with chemistry, and in the evening for endless hours played chess with his father or his brother.

When something captured his imagination, Volodya gave himself to it fantastically, wholeheartedly. Skating thus fascinated him as a boy, and he spent day after day on the ice, half drunk with the dry, frozen air of those middle-Volga steppes, till by a great effort of will he tore himself away from the ice altogether, completely gave up skating, which threatened to absorb his whole attention. A little later he did the same with chess, at which he became an excellent player. Once he found all his mental energies being absorbed by it, he threw it aside absolutely, and did not play chess again till he was shut up for most of the day in his exile's hut during the long Siberian winters. A third such victim of his combined strength and weakness was Latin. As a schoolboy he was a first-rate Latinist, and the language attracted him immensely, but once again he abandoned it because it took time which was needed for more important studies. There are competent Latinists who profess to see the influence of this early passion in the construction of his speeches.

Almost his only friend in the period of adolescence was his brother Sasha. Sasha, tall, good-looking, dreamy, serious, and studious, strictly fulfilling all his obligations, was Volodya's idol. When still a little boy he copied Sasha in

everything—played as he played, did what he did. If asked whether he wanted his porridge with milk or butter, if he wanted to play or go for a walk, he always looked first to see what Sasha was doing, answering that he would do “like Sasha.”

Volodya had his “difficult” period as a boy. The death of his father left this lively, uncontrollable boy of seventeen without a check on his exuberant moods at the very time when it was most needed. His noisy, lively, mocking chatter did not altogether please his more serious elder brother. His elder sister noticed once or twice that Sasha looked disapprovingly at her and Volodya as they talked together during one of Volodya’s more outrageous moods. “What do you think of our Volodya?” she later asked him, curious. “He’s undoubtedly a very capable fellow, but you and I don’t look on things as he does,” was the reply. “Why not?” she pressed. Sasha shrugged his shoulders, not wishing to criticise his brother. “It’s just so,” was all he would answer. Indeed, at this time there was something impudent, arrogant even, in young Volodya’s character.

This arrogance showed itself even in his relations to his mother. Sometimes while he was playing chess with Sasha she would ask him to do some little thing, or remind him of some request he had forgotten, and he would reply off-handedly, sharply even, and go on with his game. When his mother insisted, he made a joke, but did not move. “Volodya, either you go and do at once what mother asks, or I shall stop playing with you,” Sasha would then say, quietly and firmly; and without further argument Volodya would get up and do as he was asked.

In his last years at school, like most boys of spirit, he began to despise the teachers at his school, their narrow, petty outlook, their little scandals and everlasting internal dissensions, their stupidity and snobbery. From despising the teachers was only a step to despising the teaching, and this step he also made. The whole system of education appeared to his clear and ruthless mind as something irrational, prejudiced, and narrow. The whole school and its



teaching staff rested on a religious, authoritarian basis. Therefore he began to despise and hate religion and authority. His mood was one of denial of all authority, a negation of everything, a period of formation, in which the personality of the man had not yet appeared while that of the boy was already disappearing. Religion both the brothers had abandoned almost as soon as they could think for themselves. Their father was a religious man, but the last to think of trying to force his views on his children. When the boys had made up their minds they simply told him they did not wish to go to church any more, and that was all.

To what extent his brother Sasha influenced him politically it is hard to say. Certainly he must have had some influence, and Lenin at this age had no particular political views of his own. Both Sasha and Alexandra Ilyinichna, his elder sister, noticed that he would lie on his bed reading and re-reading the sentimental novels of Turgeniev, though he was actually living in the same room as Sasha, who was passionately reading Marx and the classics of political and economic literature.

Sasha had great working capacity and great self-control. As a child neither of these qualities was very strongly developed in Volodya. His school work was very easy for him and did not make great demands on his abilities, while he was hot-tempered, irascible almost. The example of Sasha's even temper and passion for serious work was therefore of great importance for him. At first he just childishly copied his elder brother, but later the imitation became more conscious and he definitely set himself to achieve the same capability for hard work and self-command. The first came the more easily ; to subdue his temper meant a big struggle and effort of will, but it was made, and successfully.

The most remarkable feature of Volodya's adolescence was this conscious effort of will to make himself a man, almost as though he had some forewarning of the unheard-of demands which life was later to make on his frail human organism. This lively, playful boy, so quick to note the weak

or comical side of others, and to mock at it mercilessly, began also to note the strong and heroic in his fellows, and to consider how much of that he was capable of achieving himself. Twice his elder sister remembers him saying of the action of some other: "I wonder, have I got enough courage to do that? I don't think so."

Bold and lively he certainly was, ironical and sarcastic also, but even in childhood never boastful, never self-important, two qualities which in later life he could never tolerate in others.

After his father died and Alexander Ilyich was already in St. Petersburg, studying at the university, Volodya became the head of the little family in Simbirsk. It was not long before he was put to the most terrible trial in this new position, a trial that was to have a lasting influence on his life.

Sasha, the beloved brother, had joined one of the many circles of revolutionary students in the capital. The 80's were years of the blackest, most hopeless reaction in Russia, a reaction which fell particularly strongly on the universities owing to the change in their constitution and the appointment of inspectors who "supervised" the political and social activities of the students and teachers alike, inspectors who looked upon themselves as, and in fact were, little more nor less than police agents. Almost the only section of the population to offer active resistance to the reaction was the students. Alexander II, the "liberator," had been assassinated on March 1st, 1881. Alexander III, a dull and hopeless drunkard whose intellectual powers not even his own father had trusted, and who succeeded in drinking himself to death by the time he was fifty, had practically re-instituted serfdom by the appointment of country magistrates with special punitive and economic powers.

The relics of the People's Will Party determined to carry on their war of extermination against the Romanovs by the elimination of this crowned sot. Alexander Ilyich Ulyanov played a leading part in the conspiracy which led to the unsuccessful attempt of March 1st, 1887.

The conspirators were quickly arrested and placed on trial. Relations in St. Petersburg at once wrote the terrible news to Simbirsk, not directly to his mother, but to a friend, V. C. Kashkadamova. She ran at once to the school to Vladimir Ilyich, then in the last class at the gymnasium. His brows knitted and he frowned darkly as he read, but for a long time he said nothing. He seemed suddenly to have grown from a happy schoolboy into a suffering man. When he spoke, it was not melodramatically, but simply, like a boy, or like a very strong man perhaps.

"Well, this is a serious affair," he said. "It may end badly for Sasha."

The arrest of his brother filled his whole mind; that lively, passionate mind that had been fascinated by chess, by skating, by Latin, to the exclusion of every other thought, was suddenly seized by a matter of life and death, by a terrible human and social tragedy.

He changed completely. No more jokes, no more teasing and irony. He sat by himself in his room, stern and silent, but when anyone spoke to him of his brother he answered simply: "It means that he had to act like that, that he could not act otherwise."

His mother, Maria Alexandrovna, that heroic woman of many sorrows, who had only just lost her husband unexpectedly, must now prepare to lose her eldest son. She got ready to go to St. Petersburg—no light journey in those days for a young man going for pleasure or study, but a terrible prospect for an old woman going on the most tragic of all errands.

Their friends, all members of the "liberal" and "enlightened" bourgeoisie, fell away at once as the news of the arrest spread, and the family found themselves practically boycotted. Not, for sure, because the neighbours loved the drunken Alexander or condemned the terrorist act of the students, but simply through fear of being compromised by acquaintance with the family of a revolutionary. Volodya wished to find a companion for his mother

on her journey, and went fruitlessly from house to house. No one would go with her.

This boy of seventeen never forgot this cowardly hypocrisy of the liberal society of his town. He neither forgot nor forgave the cowardice of these revolutionaries in words who were afraid even to help an old woman in her agony.

The beloved brother was hanged in prison at St. Petersburg together with all the other leaders of the conspiracy, and the news of his end was carried to the family at Simbirsk. "I shall never forget the expression on the face of Vladimir Ilyich at that moment," writes his sister. "He said: 'No, we shall not go along that road. We need not go along that road.'" Indeed, the story of Alexander Ulyanov sums up all the heroic mistakes, the tragedy, of the flower of the Russian intellectuals in the 70's and 80's. That all that was best and bravest in the country should throw their splendid energies into the task of exterminating the rotten dynasty of the Romanovs and a number of inhuman generals and police chiefs was an unbearable folly, however heroic. For all the odds were against this handful of conspirators—a great army and police force, a horde of spies, the ignorance of the peasant masses, the indifference of the "enlightened" bourgeoisie. Seldom in history has so much patience, courage, and persistence been so tragically wasted.

It is doubtful if Lenin had ever accepted the Populist views of his brother, or even to what extent the two had discussed politics together, though both were undoubtedly of revolutionary sympathies. But the horrible end of his brother, a brother so close to him, so noble in every way, who might have played such a precious part in the liberation of enslaved humanity, convinced him that it was "not by those methods, not along this road" that he must go, and Russia must go.

The question of methods he set himself to solve. No more heroic youths must waste themselves as Sasha had done. The way of struggle and victory was different, slower, more tedious, but surer, and in the end more splendid: the struggle not of a few chosen heroes against a number of



individuals but the tremendous battle of class against class. In this sense Lenin was to solve the problem of methods. But all his life there remained in his heart a tender spot for the leaders of the revolutionary struggles of the 70's and 80's, the terrorists and idealists of the People's Will Party.

## CHAPTER II

### CHANGING RUSSIA

ALEXANDER ILYICH, the beloved brother, who threw up his scientific career, the offer of a professorship, and a brilliant future, in order to fling himself body and soul into the revolutionary struggle against autocracy, was symptomatic of the change in intellectual outlook that was coming over the country. Though a leading member of the People's Will Party, he stood, like the famous carpenter Stephen Halperin, who blew up the Tsar's dining-room in the Winter Palace, nearer to the workers than the majority of his fellow terrorists. Alexander Ilyich had read *Capital* and was in agreement with Marx's analysis of the development of society, as is clear from his project for a party programme, which has survived. He carried on educational circles among the Petersburg workers, as his younger brother was to do a few years later, but at the bidding of his party he also fearlessly undertook the preparation of the bombs for the attempt on the Tsar. Alexander Ilyich was already half way between the past and the future, Populism and Marxism.

Russian revolutionary Socialism was of recent birth. The Land and Freedom Society was founded in 1878 as an attempt to organise on a national scale the revolutionary intelligentsia for work among the peasantry, and as a reaction against the brief visits of individuals to the villages for agitational purposes and the inciting of swiftly suppressed riots against the landlords and local officials. Its prophets were two men : Peter Lavrov—whose ideal of the "critically thinking person" who consciously becomes a revolutionary and acts as a ferment among his fellows

became the ideal of the Russian intellectuals—and the great philosopher Chernishevsky. Chernishevsky was a Hegelian, and nearer to the masses of Russia than Lavrov. His revolutionary novel, *What is to be Done*, became the Bible of Russian revolutionaries in the 80's and 90's, though it circulated only illegally in manuscript copies.

The "critically thinking person" swiftly found that all his thinking did was to land him in prison or life-long exile, since the slightest "criticism" was ruthlessly repressed by the Tsarist gendarme. So, cut off from the masses by the policeman's sabre, bullied and badgered by the most stupid bureaucracy in history, the intellectual, in alliance with the few advanced workmen with whom he had succeeded in making contact, was driven to terror as a weapon. He "declared war" on Tsarism.

In 1879 a split took place in the party. Those who still strained after mass work in the countryside formed the "Black Redivision" with a programme of agrarian revolution and redivision of the land. At their head was George Plekhanov, and in a few years they had become orthodox Marxists, aiming at the creation of a Social Democratic Working-men's Party in Russia. The terrorists founded the Narodnaya Volya, the People's Will Party. The Populists aimed at a more limited task than the Social Democrats. They sought by terrorist conspiracy to eliminate the Tsar, and in the resulting confusion hoped for a political revolution and the chance to summon a Constituent Assembly.

Their leaders, Jelyabov, Halperin, Sophia Perovskaya, were full of courage and ability. Their revolutionary consciousness told them they must seek allies among the workers, and Jelyabov tried to start a workers' paper, to found a Workers' Party. But all their best energies went into the holy feud against the Tsar. Halperin, in February 1881, failed by a few minutes to blow up Alexander II in the dining-room of the Winter Palace, and hardly had the shock of the explosion died away than a desperately determined attack in the street succeeded, on March 1st, in killing him as he drove back from church. In the

repression that followed, and in the failure of the attempt on Alexander III—for which Sasha Ulyanov perished on the scaffold—the Populists lost all their best forces and it seemed as though the revolutionary movement, having given its best blood, would die of anæmia.

The great “reform” of Alexander II, by which in 1861 the serfs were emancipated, had only substituted the yoke of the landlord and moneylender for that of the feudal serf-owner. In the Saratov district on the Volga in the 80’s rents were from eight to ten times what they had been immediately after the emancipation. Taxes, which of course the peasant paid both for himself and the landlord, rose in proportion, and prices fell catastrophically. A general degradation of peasant agriculture was taking place. In 1884 out of nine million farms in European Russia, two and a half million were without horses, while in the ten years 1888 to 1899 the peasants of Orlov province lost twenty per cent of their working cattle. Inside the village the old Russian commune was being broken up for ever. Thousands of peasants migrated to the town to seek for a living in the new factories, thousands became beggars or emigrated to far Siberia or Turkestan. The differentiation between rich and poor peasant went on apace and by the 90’s the village capitalist, the “kulak,” had become an all-Russian phenomenon.

The growth of capitalism in the village destroyed all the hopes of the Populists that Russia might avoid, through the retention of the commune, the blood-stained path of capitalist development traversed by the toilers of Western Europe. By the end of the 90’s there was a ten-million proletarian army in the country and the collapse of peasant production under the double yoke of capitalism and semi-feudal property relations had brought “the all-Russian ruin” of 1891, the most terrible famine the country had yet known.

The assassination of Alexander II and the growth of peasant disorders called forth the most brutal reaction from the government of the drunkard Alexander III. In 1889 in



every country district was appointed a "zemsky nachalnik," a kind of magistrate with extraordinary punitive powers, including those of corporal punishment, and the passport system with all its rigours was applied to the peasants, who were thus practically reduced to serfdom once again. Against the intellectuals the bureaucracy took its revenge by suppressing all the freedoms of the universities and appointing inspectors to control the studies and life of the students. In the autumn of 1887, after the failure of Alexander Ulyanov and his fellow students to remove the Tsar, the first All-Russian Student disorders broke out in Moscow and other chief towns.

But bloody executions and brutal repression had their effect. The bourgeoisie was effectively terrorised. The blank futility and despair of the characters in Chekhov's plays and stories represent only too vividly "the man of the 80's," the Russian intellectual who has given up the battle.

Nevertheless history was slowly and painfully giving birth to a new class which was to take up the gage of battle which had dropped from the beaten hands of the intellectuals. In the twenty years from 1877 to 1897 metallurgical production in Russia had trebled and textile production doubled in value. In the decade 1887 to 1897 the army of metal workers had grown from 103,000 to 153,000 ; of textile workers from 309,000 to 642,000.

The conditions of life of this new proletarian force were terrible enough in the bare figures of official reports. The worker never knew how much was due to him in wages. In 1882-83 out of 181 factories inspected in Moscow only 71 had any rules regarding payments, which were universally made monthly. One big factory paid only twice a year and even then took back almost everything through fines or enforced purchases at the factory shop—the truck system of the British manufacturers. Housing conditions were appalling, as bad as those in Shanghai and Bombay to-day, and those who have seen the grim brick "barracks" in which the most fortunate of the workers were housed by

their beneficent employers, are hardly likely to forget the awful and depressing impression created by so much humanity compressed into such prison-like monotony.

Against these conditions the workers from the very beginning struggled in the only way known to them, through strikes. In 1875 the Vera Figner group of Populists worked for a while in the Moscow mills to agitate among the spinners. In 1875 the worker Peter Alekseyev, brought to trial in the "affair of the fifty," charged with fomenting strikes, prophetically defied his accusers. "When the muscular arm of the millions of workers is raised, the yoke of despotism, hedged in by soldiers' bayonets, will be shattered to dust!"

The following year, on December 6th, the first workers' demonstration was held outside the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg when a little group of 200 to 250 workers assembled suddenly, unfurled the red flag for a few minutes, and listened for a brief moment to the call to action of a young student called George Plekhanov, the future founder of Russian Socialism. The swift flutter of the red flag against the snow, on the background of the gaudy orthodox cathedral, was to be the last for many years in the streets of the capital; but without flags, without demonstrations, the battle of the workers went on with bitter determination, each year drawing new thousands into the struggle.

In the ten years 1865 to 1875 20,000 workers struck, but in the brief five years of industrial crisis from 1881 to 1886 no less than 80,000 workers took part in 48 great strikes. One of these, the strike at the works of Timothy Morozev in the dismal textile town of Orekhovo-Zuevo near Moscow, won the first victory for the workers of all Russia. Morozev's 8,000 workers reckoned that half their wages would go as a result of a threatened twenty-five per cent cut, since a quarter was already mulcted in fines. The average monthly wage for a weaver, after all deductions, was 2 roubles 50 kopecks—about 5s. The strike was fought sharply. Over 600 arrests were made, but in spite of the

terror the weavers responded by demonstrations with the red flag. When Morozev opened his works under heavy military guard only 800 came back to their looms. In panic the Government passed the first factory laws forbidding night work for women, limiting fines to five per cent of the wage, and enforcing fortnightly payment of wages.

The 90's saw an even more rapid growth of industry and ever greater class battles. In 1887 in the south of Russia there were only two smelting plants, but from now on they grew like mushrooms. In 1889 there were 17 big smelting plants and 29 blast furnaces working and 12 more in construction. The year 1895 saw 48,000 strikers, but from 1896 to 1899 the number grew in proportions terrifying to employers and Government alike, no less than 434,000 workers being engaged in strikes of one sort and another. The employers yielded to the inevitable and the result was everywhere a noticeable rise in wages. If anyone had remembered the defiant threat of the obscure workman Peter Alekseyev they might have felt more than a little uncomfortable at the dawn of the new century. But men in chains, from Spartacus to the present day, have always been wont to justify their extinction by bold denunciation of the hand that strikes them down, and a merciful fate blinds the executioner to the possible fulfilment of his victims' prophecies.

### CHAPTER III

## THE REBEL STUDENT

A STRANGE freak of fate accompanied Lenin's entry upon his brief and stormy university career. The brother of the executed terrorist was naturally suspect to the authorities and only a golden recommendation from his headmaster and the teachers of the Simbirsk gymnasium gained him admittance to Kazan University. The headmaster was F. Kerensky, father of the pitiful political charlatan whom Lenin was to drive in panic flight from the Winter Palace when the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917. Kerensky the elder emphasised that Lenin was the "pride" of the gymnasium, not merely because of his talent, but owing to his unusual carefulness and application to his work, at the same time emphasising his "unnecessary reserve" and "unsociability," having in mind no doubt the contempt his best scholar showed for the narrow pedagogical routine and religious exercises of the school. Respect and affection for Lenin's father no doubt did much to call forth both the recommendation and the easy acceptance of the young student, though his brother's shadow lay heavily across his path.

On August 25th, 1887, he entered the university, in the faculty of law. On December 17th he was already expelled.

The student disturbances which had begun at Moscow found their echo in Kazan on December 16th. The students collected together spontaneously inside the university, calling for the hated inspector. When that official arrived in an indignant flurry they presented him with a number of demands, many of them concerning their own student freedoms which had been taken away, but others directly



political and even affecting his own office. The next evening the gendarmes broke into the Ulyanov's flat and Maria Alexandrovna, who in May had lost her eldest son on the scaffold, had the bitterness of seeing her second son taken away a prisoner.

Forty arrests were made altogether, and two days later the order came exiling the young Ulyanov to his mother's little estate in the village of Kokushino, forty miles away in the depths of the country. He had chosen his path and he did not look back.

It was said that the inspector personally signalled out Ulyanov from among the front rank of mutinous students. Lenin himself told the story to an old university friend that when he was brought up before the magistrate that official, in the patronising manner of his kind, asked him, "What do you go about making disturbances for, young man? Can't you see you're up against a wall?" "Yes," the "young man" answered. "It's a wall, but a rotten one. Push it, and over it will go."

At Kokushino that winter and all through the following spring and summer he spent his days in reading. The question of his future education disturbed the monotonous quiet of those days both for himself and for his mother. The fact was that in the rigid system of Tsarist Russia there was no hope of earning a future living unless he completed his university course and entered one of the so-called "free" professions, which in Russia were more of a feudal caste than even in England. Indeed the boy of seventeen was not guilty of any crime, beyond that of being his brother's brother. He had gathered with a crowd of turbulent youths, shouted a few hot phrases and for this was to be condemned as for ever "politically undesirable," have every avenue of learning and advancement closed to him. In the official document on his expulsion the worst crime of which he is accused is "impoliteness" and talking in the smoking-room with "suspicious" students, thereby giving reason to think that he was meditating "something bad."

Perhaps the Ministry of Education by superhuman penetration recognised a sworn enemy of the State in the mutinous boy. Perhaps, and it is much more likely, they were simply cruelly stupid. In any case, when, at the end of May, Lenin asked for permission to enter any other university in the country it was curtly refused him. A personal letter of his mother to the Minister a few months later, in which no doubt she relied on the services of her husband to the State, met with the same fate, as did the request that Lenin, if his own country could not give him education, should be allowed to study abroad.

In October, however, they were permitted to return to Kazan, where the family occupied a room in a wing of a three-storied wooden house, with a pleasant view behind on to the parks and gardens of the hill that rises over the wide Volga. Here he fitted up a spare kitchen, on the second floor, as his study, and, dividing his time between here and the garden, again gave himself up to reading. In the morning he read his law books, for he was determined to complete his university course, with or without tuition and official help. In the afternoon and evening he read Socialist and economic literature. It was now with growing excitement that he swept through the first volume of Marx's *Capital*, and then one after another, as rapidly as he could obtain them (they were difficult to get, either in the original or in translation), all the well-known works of Marx and Engels. His keen mind, his immense capacity for absorbing all that he read, drew out the very essence of the teaching of the two great founders of scientific Socialism.

Marx and Engels more than once in their correspondence dealt with the possibilities of the Russian revolution. There is even a letter of Engels in which he discusses the chance of such a revolution arising from a world war, and the far-reaching results it would have. Engels, still alive at this time, and receiving the homage of the Socialists of every country at his house in Regent's Park Road, was busily following the revolutionary movement throughout the world, and, whenever he had time, actively participating

in international Labour politics. He was the acknowledged leader of German Social Democracy and was anxiously, even then, noting and fiercely combating those tendencies within it which have ended in its destruction. He was working hard to educate Marxist leaders of both French and British Socialism, but he had time to spare for the banks of the Volga also.

Indeed, it would be the greatest mistake to think that either Marx or Engels despised the revolutionary possibilities of Russia, or were ignorant of Russian conditions. Both knew the language and literature of Russia well and were intimate with all the leading Russian revolutionaries of their day. Equally foolish is it to imagine that Marx was unknown in Russia, that he represented something "alien" to the Russian "genius," that the Bolsheviks, as it were, "grafted" him on to the intellectual life of the country, and that the cutting smothered the original plant.

There had been a Russian section of the First International of which Marx himself was secretary and conducted all the correspondence. Bakunin, the famous Russian anarchist, as early as the 60's had translated the Communist Manifesto into Russian and begun work on a translation of *Capital*. This translation was later finished by the well-known Populist writer, Danielson, who wrote under the pseudonym of "Nikolai On" and was, in fact, the first translation of *Capital* to be made into any language. Both Marx and Engels carried on a long correspondence with such famous Russian Socialists as "Nikolai On," Lopatin, Vera Zasulich, and even with the Central Committee of the People's Will Party who wrote to Marx with the greatest respect as the acknowledged leader of the world Socialist movement. Indeed, the Populists were able to make certain capital out of the fact that both Marx and Engels, acting on insufficient information, chiefly on the famous work of their friend the historian Kovalevsky, went some way towards accepting the views of the Populists on the rôle of the village commune in Russian society.

But the most famous Russian with whom they had

relations was George Plekhanov (1857-1918), the founder of the modern Russian Labour Movement. Plekhanov translated the *Communist Manifesto* into Russian in 1882 (before it was published in England), and, after studying the Russian scene with Marxist eyes, came to the conclusion that here also the development of capitalism and the modern proletariat were inevitable. In 1885 he wrote his famous statement of faith, *Our Disagreements*, in which he pointed out all the falseness of the Populist economic and political views. He had already founded, two years before, from a group of Socialist exiles in Europe, the first Russian social-democratic party, the "Group of the Liberation of Labour," and at the first Congress of the Second International in Paris in 1889 he represented Russia. Marx and Marxism found their footing in Russia at the same time and in the same way as in every other country in the world, first of all among the most left-ward groups of the intelligentsia, and then, as soon as the proletariat had become conscious as a class of its existence, in the form of a political party.

So that Lenin, if he studied Marx with greater passion and concentration than his fellow Socialists, was far from being alone in Russia. Scattered groups of Marxist intellectuals existed in every large town, in Kazan as elsewhere. The life of these groups, whose activity chiefly consisted of reading reports to one another on scientific subjects and mutual discussion, had little connection with the masses. For the most part the members were students, or expelled students like Lenin, with an admixture of political exiles. Only rarely were working men recruited into the circles, and the members themselves carried on practically no direct agitation or organisation in the factories and villages.

There were several such circles in Kazan, but the conditions of the police terror were such that it was almost impossible for them to make any attempts at uniting. The chief of these circles, however, which had been formed by the Marxist N. E. Fedoseyev, Lenin occasionally frequented. Fedoseyev was a striking and tragic personality, author of some remarkable studies in Russian history which were



eagerly read in manuscript by his pupils, among whom Lenin may be included, although he never succeeded in meeting Fedoseyev in person. The manuscripts have almost all been lost, and to-day only the memory remains of a gifted and unhappy revolutionary with whose fate Lenin was to be still further bound up while in exile in the depths of Eastern Siberia.

At this time there was working in a dismal underground bakery in Kazan a young baker, by name Pyeskov, who, in the rare intervals he could snatch from the overheated, dirty cellar where he worked, carried on propaganda among the workers of Kazan. Pyeskov was also undergoing a "university" training of an original kind—the training of a vagabond worker in the Volga towns and along the shores of the Black Sea. Here, in Kazan, he had met Fedoseyev and under his influence begun to read Marx. The weary four years spent in Kazan were the foundations of his book learning. He left the town shortly after young Ulyanov came there. These two were to meet years later and become lifelong friends. The baker was then known as Maxim Gorky, Maxim "the bitter," and Vladimir Ulyanov had become Nikolai Lenin.

In May 1889 the Ulyanovs left Kazan for Samara. Only just in time, for a few weeks later news reached Lenin in the little village of Alakaevka, where he was spending the summer on the farm of his future brother-in-law, that the police in Kazan had arrested the whole of the Fedoseyev group. Heavy sentences were dealt out. Fedoseyev himself spent over two years in prison before being exiled to Eastern Siberia, where he arrived broken in health and spirit. Lenin made a desperate effort to see him through the agency of the prisoner's devoted lover and friend, M. G. Hopfenhaus, travelling to Vladimir in the expectation that Fedoseyev was coming out of prison there, but in vain.

Fedoseyev had stood out among the Marxists by his bold reply to Mikhailovsky, a Populist journalist living in Paris who had accused the Marxists of "directly insisting on the necessity of breaking up our economic organisation (the

village commune) which guarantees an independent position to the toilers in production." In Samara, Lenin quickly made friends among the youth and carried on the polemic against Mikhailovsky and the Populists, reading a number of essays to them on questions of Russian economy. He ransacked the Samara library for statistical material which should allow him to study "Russian reality," to understand the changes in the social organisation going on around him, changes which his adversaries obstinately refused to recognise.

At the same time, with that astonishing ability to win the confidence of all kinds of people which was to be one of his greatest assets, he made many acquaintances among the older exiles from the Land and Freedom and People's Will Parties. Perhaps these old Populists, half-tamed terrorists, suspicious in general of the new youth, were the more willing to accept him for his relationship to their own martyr Alexander Ulyanov, and Lenin on his side was always full of admiration for their revolutionary pluck and resource. While arguing with them mercilessly on political grounds, he was only too willing to learn from them the complicated technique of revolutionary conspiracy of which they were the masters. True, his first lesson had come from his own elder sister, who, seeing him busy writing a long letter, after his expulsion from the university, to a student friend in another town, had warned him of the folly of exposing to suspicion a comrade who for all he knew might still be an entirely blameless character in the eyes of the police. A moment's thought had convinced Lenin of the truth of this first elementary lesson—never to write anything serious or political through the post. But his real mastery of the revolutionists' technique he learned from these veterans of the bloody struggle against the Tsar. They in their turn, and with the natural intolerance of the old and (to themselves) tried towards the young and inexperienced, admired his talent but considered him too outspoken and sharp in his comments.

Lenin not only studied statistics and talked with exiles

whilst he was in Samara. He laid here the foundation of his wonderful practical knowledge of the Russian peasant, that real key to Russian reality. After he left Samara he was never again to have the opportunity of coming into direct contact with this nine-tenths of the Russian people, but what he learned was to stand him in good stead. His visit to the farm of the Elizarev's, his future relatives by marriage, gave him many opportunities for direct speech with all types of peasants. To the wonder of his friends he would spend hours talking with Mark Elizarev's brother Paul, a typical peasant capitalist, a kulak, the type of rich peasant striving to advance still further by petty trading. But Lenin could talk with anyone and get something of value from it, a feature which is possessed only by the rarest of the human race.

An even wider and more practical knowledge he got through his legal studies. At first, evidently compromised by the Fedoseyev affair, he was refused permission to take his law examinations as an external student, but finally as the result of the direct intervention of his mother before the Minister of Education, the permission was given in the spring of 1890. In the spring of 1891 he travelled to Petersburg and successfully passed his first series of examinations ; and in November of the same year this student, who had spent just six weeks at a university and never seen a tutor, was granted a first class diploma in the faculty of law by the University of St. Petersburg.

At the beginning of 1892 he began to practise at Samara as assistant defending counsel in the local court. The experience was invaluable. With one of his legal friends, the secretary to the county stipendiary, he went from village to village listening to the settlement of land disputes and he himself in the course of the year defended no less than ten criminal cases in the Samara court. They were almost exclusively cases of poor peasants or groups of peasants charged with stealing from the barns of rich kulaks or the trunks of travelling merchants. His last case was that of a signalman on the railway charged with carelessness in

allowing the collision of two empty goods trains in a siding. Whether or not the cases were particularly hopeless, or Lenin proved a poor advocate, his clients without exception were speedily found guilty ! But perhaps the young barrister learned yet another lesson from this, that the poor and helpless need expect no mercy before the implacable law of the inviolability of private property.

An acquaintance of the Samara days describes him as follows : " In 1892 he was a young man of small stature, but strongly built, with fresh, ruddy face, with beard and moustaches just sprouting, reddish in colour, and his hair, fading away from his forehead, also reddish. The eye was struck by his big head and high white brow. His small eyes were constantly screwed up, his look serious, thoughtful, and intent. On his thin lips a slightly ironical smile. . . ." Another friend gives us a picture of him in " his usual dress : a blue cotton Russian shirt, with a cord for belt ; and his usual occupation : a deep, serious, insistent study of the theory of Marx."

Perhaps neither the dress nor the occupation of one who looks for a career at the bar, and indeed the Samara days of Lenin were drawing to a longed-for close. The apprenticeship was ended, it was time to start his life's work.

The terrible famine of 1891 must have shaken him deeply, shown him clearly the road the country was travelling. Samara was in the centre of the stricken district, and the humanitarian intellectuals all hastened to offer their help to the Government Commission. Not so Lenin. He stood aside. None sympathised more deeply and really with the sufferings of the peasantry, but he saw the vile hypocrisy of a system which brought millions to ruin and starvation and then hastened with tears and charity to the relief of the perishing and tormented slaves. Lenin sought for another way and he knew now that he had found it.

Samara, the deadly monotony of the Russian provinces, had become like a prison to him. He longed passionately for the centre, for an outlet for his immense energy in the heart of the struggle against autocracy and capitalism.



His sister tells how, in the hot summer of 1892, he came to her to tell how the night before he had been reading Chekhov's *Ward No. 6*. "After I had read the story, so strong was the impression it made on me I had to get up and go outside," he told her. "I felt that I was in Ward No. 6 myself." Samara, his sister comments, had become for him a Ward No. 6.

Indeed he might have left a year before, after finishing his examinations, but consideration for his mother kept him by her side yet a little while longer. Another terrible blow had fallen upon the unfortunate and heroic woman. Her daughter Olga, a quick and brilliant spirit, while studying medicine in Petersburg had contracted typhoid and died. On Lenin fell the sad lot of travelling to the capital to tend his sister in her last days, and then, with heavy heart, to return and comfort his stricken mother. At last the whole family decided to move to Moscow where his younger brother was to enter the university. But Lenin would not go to the "big village" which was Moscow in the 90's. He was finished for ever with the provinces, with Ward No. 6. He went straight to St. Petersburg.

studied  
physics  
math.

## CHAPTER IV

### PETERSBURG

ARRIVED in the capital, Lenin, more for form's sake, since the police still followed his every movement, prepared to carry on his legal profession with the advocate Volkenstein. But it was the purest formality. His mind was already made up, his way clear before him, and Ulyanov, the unruly student, was about to become Lenin, the forger of the greatest revolutionary party in the history of the world. He arrived at Petersburg in September. At Christmas he went to Moscow to spend the holidays with his family, and here for the first time came out into the open as a champion of revolutionary Marxism against the ideas of the Populists, whose monopoly of Russian revolutionary traditions was become a fetter on the development of the young and eager new class which claimed the future for itself.

Not that the Social Democrats, still little more than a few small groups of intellectuals, counted for anything as yet. Even the police despised them. The chief of the Imperial Police Department about this time reported of them that they are only "a little group ; they may become something in fifty years' time." But at least after Lenin's trip to Moscow the Populists were to know that in Russia "the little group" had produced a leader. The occasion of this conviction was an evening gathering in the Moscow rooms of one of the Populists. The chief speaker was the "honoured" guest P. V. Vorontsev, one of the best known of their publicists and a great hunter of Marxists. Victor Chernov, afterwards famous as a leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and Minister of Agriculture in

Kerensky's Government, was one of the guests. A neighbour whispered to him : " Have a look at that young man there, with the sandy beard : he's a very, very interesting person and a big noise among the Petersburg Marxists." The young man was Lenin, invited accidentally, and unknown to those present, as they were unknown to him.

When the speaker had finished, Lenin rose to oppose him. He was neither a respecter of persons nor a mincer of words, and he fell upon Vorontsev with considerable violence. The age and apparent learning of his opponent did not embarrass him, and with all the strength of his convictions, his deep knowledge of Marxism, and scientific equipment of statistical proof, salted with his inimitable sarcasm, he demolished Populism stone by stone. After he had finished, the meeting at once found its course. No one else's speech was of any interest, and the evening became a battle royal between these two representatives of " fathers and children." It was characteristic of Lenin that he did not think to ask who his opponent was until he had completed his attack. When he heard that he had been at grips with the redoubtable Vorontsev, he was a little embarrassed at the sharpness of his own tone and soon after left the house. His respect for the revolutionary past of his brother's companions-in-arms was still great, though his contempt for their theory was illimitable.

His action in that evening's debate won him much renown, however, among the Petersburg Marxists, and he was at once accepted among them as a remarkable and leading personality. But Lenin was not satisfied by mere debating victories over the enemies of Marxism, and the summer of 1894 he devoted to a serious polemic against the whole conception of Populism and against its chief protagonist, Mikhailovsky. For this he used as a basis the essays he had read in the student circles at Samara, and the result was his first considerable work, *What are the Friends of the People and how they Fight Against Social Democracy*. He himself a little later defined Populism as being built up on three mistaken ideas : the first that the

development of capitalism in Russia is a symptom of decline, leading to the desire to "restrain" capitalism, and "prevent" it from breaking up the ancient "pillars" of Russian village democracy; the second the recognition that the Russian economic system and peasant "Communes" represented something peculiar to Russia; and the third the misunderstanding of the connection between the "intelligentsia" and the legal and political institutions of the country and the material interests of definite social classes. The Populists, with their "critically thinking men," represented the intellectual as a force capable of "dragging history on to other lines," an idea which the materialist Lenin, with his clear view of the mutual interconnection of the individual and the social conditions which beget him, laughed to scorn.

It may seem that these early battles with a party upon whom history has pronounced its final verdict are only of an academic interest for non-Russians. This is not so, however. Neither the ideas of the Populists, nor the ideas of Lenin, originated in Russia. If Lenin owed everything to Marx and Engels, the Populists in their economic teachings were lineally descended from Sismondi. In England we have had a phenomenon very similar in many ways in the "Young England" movement of the 30's and 40's, while the verbose Carlyle in his reactionary social philosophy was not so far apart from these Russian intellectuals. But the phenomenon is by no means dead, even to-day, in countries where the social conditions of Russia in the 80's are repeated. Sun Yat Senism in China is an Eastern version of the same doctrine. Although the essences of Gandhism, and the classes from which it draws its inspiration, are different, yet echoes of Populism can be caught here also. Mazzini, by denying the need for a revolution in the agrarian relations of the nineteenth-century Italy, cut himself off from Populism, yet he in some ways too is its European prophet, while the famous Indian democrat, Tilak, India's Mazzini, is nearer even than Gandhi to the ideas of Mikhailovsky and Vorontsev,

and indeed in his propaganda called for direct initiation of their tactics. Lenin, as he was perfectly aware, was attacking a current of social thought which had no mere narrowly national importance.

In *What are the Friends of the People* he resolutely destroyed the false conception of the Populists of the direction of Russian history and laid bare the reactionary character of their theories. But he did more than this. His book opposed to their reactionary idealism the revolutionary materialism of Marx and Engels, was a brilliant example of the application of materialist dialectic to the conditions of Russian reality. Lenin did not say that capitalism *ought* to develop in Russia because it had become the method of production and social form in Europe and America. He proved by incontrovertible facts that it *was* developing, and on the basis of these facts went one step further, and showed that with capitalism there inevitably developed the contradictions which would mean the democratic overthrow of absolutism, and that the working-class, which was the creation of capitalism, forced by history to the head of this revolutionary movement, would not rest content with this first victory, but press on to its own emancipation, to the struggle for a Communist revolution.

This was the first Marxist work to be written *inside* Russia, and its influence on its readers was deep. From all sides, philosophical, historical, economical, it answered for Russian Socialists the pressing problems of Russian reality, cleared the way for them to the building of a new party free from the false ideology of the past, boldly renounced the "heritage" of the old-fashioned revolutionaries, and gave self-consciousness to the heir to Russia's future, her most oppressed and youngest class, the factory workers, the proletarians. Barely twenty-four years old, with this work Lenin stood at once at the head of the Russian Social Democratic movement, fully armed, the tactics and strategy of the coming revolutionary battles clear in his head.

Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Socialism, already a great figure in the newly founded Second International,



was still for many years to be looked on by Lenin himself as his leader, but Plekhanov was no more than a brilliant interpreter of Marx, a better writer and more conscientious scientific worker than his fellow-in-arms Karl Kautsky, the pedantic theoretician of the German Socialists, but, like Kautsky, never more than an epigone, a learned interpreter of Marx and Engels. Lenin, on the other hand, in his very first work showed that for him Marxism was not a dogma, a Holy writ for "interpretation," but a living method for application to surrounding reality, for the changing of the old and the creation of the new. For to Lenin that reality was already inseparably connected with the consciousness of the millions of Russia's toilers, that mass of revolutionary material which in another twenty-three years was to set the world on fire.

Few people were able to read *Friends of the People*, but on those who did, including the police, it made an unforgettable impression. Martov, afterwards to be his political adversary, says that the book "showed the literary gifts and ripe political thought of a man forged of the material from which party leaders are created." Another Socialist of the Petersburg days says that it became their "gospel." Yet a third, referring to the conditions of its production, calls it "a voice from underground . . . full of revolutionary passion."

Of course, to print such a book legally could not be dreamed of, and illegal means had to be sought. Lenin's work was the first printing enterprise to be undertaken by the Petersburg illegal circle of Social Democrats. The student A. Ganshin assumed the difficult and dangerous task of printing the manuscript, and went to Moscow for the type, but the compositor who had promised to get it for him took fright lest there should be a stocktaking in the press and took it back again. After several other unsuccessful attempts, Ganshin decided to print from a lithographic stone, and, gathering the materials with the utmost secrecy from here and there, set off for the country estate of his father, one hundred and sixty miles from Moscow. But

Ganshin could not manage the printing, and finally was compelled to use a primitive copying machine. Finally, a second edition was completed in Petersburg on the hectograph.

The few copies of the note-books (it was printed in three parts) were eagerly passed from hand to hand, and most of them disappeared for ever, including all existing of the second note-book, in the course of police raids and arrests, including a raid on the house of Ganshin. The book, of course, was printed anonymously, and the gendarmes never succeeded in establishing its authorship. The Moscow detectives had sufficient class-consciousness to pick out at once the essence of Lenin's work, and in their official minute on the search of the illegal press summarise the contents as follows :

“ The anonymous author, speaking in the name of the Russian Social Democrats, and very hotly and passionately contesting the views of the above-mentioned ‘ Liberal Democrats,’ who propose that it is possible to improve the existence of ‘ the exploited majority ’ by means of partial reforms of the existing social and economic structure, advances the idea that the only method of alleviation for the necessitous section of the population will be the overthrow of capitalism as at present existing through the aid of the class struggle. By this aim the political activity of the Social Democrats is determined, which consists in supporting the development and organisation of the working-class movement in Russia, its conversion from its present condition of scattered attempts at protest, which are deprived of any directing idea, of riots and strikes, into the organised struggle of the whole working class, directed against the bourgeois régime and aiming at the expropriation of the expropriators. The article ends with the following phrase : ‘ When its [the working-class's] advanced representatives assimilate the idea . . . of the historical rôle of the Russian worker, when these ideas get a wide circulation and among the workers

firm organisations are created, converting the present scattered struggle of the workers into a conscious class struggle—then the Russian worker, having risen to the head of all the democratic elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead the Russian proletariat (along with the proletariat of all countries) to the direct road of open political struggle for a victorious Communist revolution ! ’ ’

To few political leaders in the world’s history has it been given to fulfil so exactly the programme they drew up when they were twenty-four years old. The police official in Moscow, carefully summarising the tiny blue-printed pages, in his wildest dreams did not imagine it. And perhaps only a very few of the handful who succeeded in reading it really believed in that revolutionary future. But those few knew that they were reading not mere revolutionary bravado, but the vital analysis of a man who had the mind to command facts in their historical relationships, not just as isolated “ statistics.”

The tasks Lenin laid down in his book were practical ones, and for him the union of theory and practice was the essence of his Marxist philosophy. His shot fired, and the aim proved true, he turned to practical activity among the workers of the capital. In this St. Petersburg period, according to the word of his wife, Krupskaya, Lenin the leader of the working masses was forged.

The condition of Marxian Socialism when he arrived was far from enviable. In Lenin’s own words, after he arrived in Petersburg he spent his time walking the streets looking for Marxists. Perhaps the position was not quite as bad as all that. At any rate, there existed a small group, working in conditions of strictest conspiracy, most of whose members were students of the Technical Academy, or, like N. K. Krupskaya, teachers. The members carried on education circles among the workers, read and discussed Marx with them, but were in no sense a party, nor did they carry on any practical activities, with the exception of the illegal

publication of Lenin's book. This group was called the "elders," and its leader was Lenin. There was another group of young students, the "youth," who worked more or less openly, and aimed rather at purely economic reforms for the workers, on the model of the English trade unionists, than at any political struggle with absolutism.

Contact with the workers presented great difficulties. For an intellectual to be seen so much as speaking to a worker was to put himself and all his companions under immediate suspicion. The two lived in different parts of the town, or, rather, in different "towns," for the capital of the Russian Empire only too well reflected the two worlds into which capitalism divides every great city. In the centre, the magnificent Palladian buildings of the Admiralty, the Senate, the Winter Palace, the fine avenues and streets of clean flats rising above the quiet canals. On the outskirts, in the district of Basil Island, dirty courtyards, little one- and two-storied buildings, more often than not of wood, or great brick barracks; no pavements, muddy streets, and evil lighting. So the Marxists, to avoid discovery, had practically to run two separate organisations, one for workers and one for intellectuals, where each could meet his fellows without risk of suspicion. The first met in ill-smelling taverns, since they had neither room nor privacy at "home," the others in the flats of sympathetic intellectuals, or the rooms of the more prosperous students, or in the public libraries of the centre.

The circles of workers were recruited from the frequenters of the workers' libraries then being opened by charitable bourgeois, from the pupils of night schools run by the same people, and, more occasionally, through direct contacts. Lenin set himself the aim of uniting all the different circles into one party, which should issue agitational literature and eventually prepare for the illegal publication of its own newspaper. The general position was a favourable one. At many of the big factories attempts to lower wage rates were being made, and at none of them was it difficult, once contacts had been made with the workers inside and

the necessary concrete information obtained, to set going a ferment which might be the preliminary to a great strike. But Lenin, with his marvellous instinctive understanding of the workers' outlook, knew that it was useless to approach with light-hearted appeals to strike for nothing in particular except the general advancement of humanity. Appeals must be based on fact.

The facts were not easy to get, and Lenin was not to be satisfied until he had exactly what he wanted, and what he wanted was sufficient on which to organise a strike in the given factory. His first effort, as he himself relates it, was awe-inspiring in its thoroughness. "I very distinctly remember my 'first experiment,' which I am not going to repeat. I spent many weeks 'examining' a working man, who came to visit me, about the conditions prevailing in the enormous factory at which he was employed. True, after great effort, I managed to obtain material for a description (of just one single factory !), but at the end of each interview the working man would wipe the sweat from his brow and say to me smilingly : 'I would rather work overtime than answer your questions.' "

We can picture him as he is described by his comrades at this time : shabbily dressed, wearing a student's peaked cap and Russian high boots. The bald dome of a forehead in the course of the year had become even more noticeable, while the wrinkles on his face made him look nearly twice his real age ; hair, moustache, and beard not quite in the neatest trim, but still not wild like the typical devil-may-care student intellectual of those days. If news came to him of some disorder in a factory beyond the Nevsky Gate, he would pull on an old worker's cap, slip his arms into a long canvas overcoat, and go off with a comrade to the scene of action.

"By his very blood," one of the comrades of those days writes, "he seemed one of these popular masses. Only his eyes, dark hazel, showed you that here was an unusual, striking man." Yet another emphasises his essentially homely face and manners, not very impressive at first



sight. Only after first acquaintance was over did you find yourself taking more and more notice of him, till finally he completely dominated. But in the tavern where he sat with his friend, drinking cup after cup of tea, ears alert for gossip on the strike among the working girls in the factory round the corner, even the cutest police-spy would not have taken him for anything but the most insignificant Volga peasant just come to town.

A building worker, Knyazev, employed on the new Admiralty building, describes the impression their future leader made on the workers in his study circle. Knyazev, having organised a circle, was told that he was lucky—"A Nikolai Petrovich is coming to you. He is one of the best, so see that the workers in your circle are serious and dependable." At the agreed-on time, Knyazev tells, "someone knocked on my door. Opening, I saw a man of about thirty, with a little sandy beard, round-faced, shrewd-eyed under his pulled-down cap, wearing an autumn overcoat with the collar up, though it was only summer. In short, the most nondescript-looking of men. But his look was so serious and commanding that his words made you involuntarily submit. He lectured for two hours, simply, clearly, explaining all the difficulties. He questioned each one of us on these lines : Where do you work, what are the conditions, what is the development of the workers in the factory, their views, whether they are capable of assimilating Socialist views, what are their chief interests, what do they read, and so on.

"His manner of talking was different from that of other intellectuals. When he had gone, after fixing the day for the next meeting, all at once began asking, 'Who's that? He talks fine, without any hesitation.'"

Lenin came once a week to this circle, but it was not the only one he was leading, or Knyazev organising. When they met, he would eagerly ask the worker a rapid series of questions : "How are the circles getting on? What's happening in the factories? You, being directly connected with the circles, ought to know what's going on inside the

factories, with what the workers are dissatisfied, and who is to blame for it. You ought to know the interests of the workers, what they are most interested in, how to approach them."

Lenin was never afraid to demand hard work of his comrades once he trusted them, or to instruct them while he himself at the same time learned from them. When Knyazev told other comrades of the big demands "Nikolai Petrovich" made on him, he was told, "Never mind, never mind, take your example from him. He works a tremendous lot himself and we've got to work too and help him." They called him already in affection "the old man," and by this name he was known to his party comrades till he died.

He had a very clear idea of what he was doing. The study circles were good for propaganda among the most advanced workers. But only agitation among the working masses themselves could make the mass movement which the few were to lead. He was fond of quoting Plekhanov: "Propaganda gives many ideas to a small circle of persons, but agitation a single idea to the masses." The difficulties that beset the agitators were immense. Krupskaya and others of the women members of the circles were forced to disguise themselves as working women and go into the barracks of the spinners at the English-owned Thornton factory in order to glean information on the feelings of the workers there. They followed tired workers home late at night through the most unfrequented streets in order to mark the door at which they went in and then thrust a leaflet under it. Only very rarely did they successfully get into conversation with one. But the fruits of this heart-breaking, painstaking work were to be seen before the year closed.

Lenin explained carefully to his sister how you should approach the backward workers who still believed in God and the Tsar. "Of course, if you immediately start speaking against the Tsar and the existing system, you will at once drive them away. But then their whole daily life is bound

up with politics. The roughness and stupidity of policemen, magistrates, gendarmes, and their interference on every disagreement with the employer, and always on the latter's side, the attitude to strikes of all those who hold any sort of authority, all that quickly shows the worker on whose side these gentry are. It is necessary only to point this out every time in leaflets and articles, show up the rôle of the local policeman or gendarme, and then gradually the workers' ideas, once turned that way, will develop further. Only it is important from the very beginning to emphasise this and not let any illusions grow that mere struggle with the factory owners can get anything. For example, there is a new law concerning the workers ; it must be explained, shown how far it does anything for the workers, how far for the capitalists. And then we shall put a leading article in our paper, 'How the Minister cares for the Workers,' which will show them what our legislation really is, and whose interests it defends. We talk moderately about the Minister, without mentioning the Tsar. But this article will be political, and the leader in every issue must be so, in order that the paper should educate the political consciousness of the workers."

Lenin's advice was taken by the Bolsheviks as a party, and on the basis of it they made the Russian Revolution. They were a party which always stood ahead of the masses, ready to lead, but which was never divided from them, never stood above or apart from them. By the spring of 1895 the first foundation-stone of the great party was laid, and Lenin prepared the next step—to establish relations with their acknowledged leader, Plekhanov, and the little group of Russian Socialists abroad. For this a trip to Switzerland and Germany was essential. A fortunate attack of inflammation of the lungs provided the excuse, and in May he crossed the frontier to "recuperate"—in reality to establish contact with Plekhanov's group, "The Emancipation of Labour." It was the first breath outside the prison-house of the Tsarist Empire, soon to become in a very literal sense for Lenin a prison. And the first steps were

amusingly stumbling. When the train passed through Austria towards the Swiss frontier, he realised for the first time the sad gap which lies between reading a language and speaking it. He put a question in German to the conductor. The latter replied, but Lenin did not understand the answer, so the conductor, thinking he had to do with a deaf man, repeated his answer more loudly, but Lenin still did not understand, so the conductor grew angry with the stupid foreigner and passed on.

After a short halt at Salzburg he crossed into Switzerland, sitting with his eyes glued to the train window in wonder at the scenery. For the dweller of the Volga steppes and forests the blue lakes and dazzling mountain peaks must have come as startlingly alive as though he were seeing a vivid dream.

At Geneva he met Plekhanov, but no record of this first meeting has remained. From there he went to Zürich to make the acquaintance of Plekhanov's fellow exile, Axelrod. Axelrod was completely vanquished by the small, colourless young man, bringing as his only introduction a volume of collected articles by various advanced economists entitled *Materials on the problem of the Economic Development of Russia*, which dry-sounding title had been found by the police to contain such inflammatory revolutionary material that they had burned the whole edition, on the principle of light a fire to stop a fire. The article which had particularly attracted their attention was by a certain K. Tulin, and this article also immediately attracted Axelrod, as it had Plekhanov before him.

Axelrod having informed his young visitor the next day that he admired the article but disagreed entirely with its conclusions, Lenin modestly admitted himself the author. As the same power which had burned the book in Petersburg was visible in Zürich, keeping a vigilant watch on the exiles, with the help of the police of democratic Switzerland, Axelrod and Lenin decided to go into the country for a few days, where they might argue undisturbed by spying eyes. It was a hot summer, but the village to which they

went was far from the dusty town, beside a blue lake, and they rambled together for a week over the surrounding hills. The disputed question in Lenin's article was the relationship of the working-class party to the Russian Liberals in the struggle against absolutism. Lenin, although himself on good personal terms with certain of these Liberals, such as Struve and Potresev, was against any political coalition with people whom he distrusted to his very core. Axelrod and Plekhanov were in favour of a united front of all "progressive elements" against the Tsarist terror. In the end, in the course of their walks over the mountain-side, Axelrod succeeded in getting Lenin to agree that he and Plekhanov were right, and at the same time noted the complete lack of vanity and the willingness to learn of this colourless young man who had not even thought it necessary to tell him that in Petersburg he, Lenin, was the recognised leader of the Socialist workers, and was already known for his polemical writings against the enemies of Marxism. Lenin, agreeing on the necessity for a united front for the overthrow of absolutism, nevertheless interpreted that united front in a very original way—a way which, as we shall see, in the great crisis of 1905 was to lead him into direct conflict with Plekhanov and Axelrod, then no longer his teachers but bitter political foes.

Originally, too, he interpreted the remarks of Axelrod on the relations between the exiled Social Democrats and the party members in Russia, an interpretation which was to be one of the chief reasons for the split which occurred in the movement eight years later at the London conference of the party, when Lenin himself was to be in the position of an exiled leader. One last counsel of Axelrod he took at once to heart—that on returning to Russia he should immediately organise the study circles in St. Petersburg into a proper party, with some such name as "The Union for the Liberation of Labour," which should serve as a nucleus for an all-Russian party.

Well satisfied with each other, pupil and master parted.



When they were to meet again, it was to be no longer in that relationship. Struggle, imprisonment, and exile would already have forged out of Lenin the revolutionary leader, conscious of his purpose and ready to go even to the length of a split with the "fathers" of the movement in order to keep its revolutionary character uncompromised.

From Switzerland he went on to Paris, to be charmed with the summer green of the parks and boulevards, the bright streets, the careless manners of the Parisians—such a contrast to the bureaucratic strictness and snobbery of Petersburg. Here he met Paul Lafargue, the son-in-law of Marx, an actual participator in the great French events of 1871, when the proletariat for the first time in history made an independent bid for power. Lafargue welcomed young people to his house in Passy—in fact he would not tolerate old ones—and the young Russian was made welcome. He made the acquaintance of Marx's daughter Laura, with whom the fiery young Lafargue had fallen in love at first sight, and, when his eager suit made no progress, personally appealed to Marx for help, only to be told with an amused smile that he should study mathematics to assuage his passion. However, he had conquered in the end, and Laura Marx was there to welcome Lenin while her husband with cynical humour attempted to disillusion the eager Russian as to the revolutionary knowledge and ability of the Western Socialists.

Lenin explained to him with enthusiasm how the Russian Socialists organised their study groups among the workers.

"And what do you do in these groups?" asked Lafargue, with polite scepticism.

"We begin with popular lectures, and then with the most advanced workers we study Marx."

"And do they read Marx, then?" asked Lafargue.

"Yes, they read him."

"And understand him?"

"And understand him."

"Ah, that's where you are mistaken," concluded

Lafargue. "They don't understand anything. With us, even after twenty years of a Socialist movement, nobody understands Marx."

And Lenin, for whom no word was ever spoken in vain, did not forget the ironical comment of the disillusioned Frenchman. When he met the leaders of the great German Socialist Party a few weeks later, particularly their theoretical leader, Kautsky, the remark remained in his mind. It was still in his mind when he came back to Russia and set to work to organise a real party, a *Marxist* party. Socialism, revolutionary Marxism, was not to be learned from books or the study, any more than it could be learned from the Parliamentary intrigues which certain French and German "Socialists" were then beginning to point at proudly as the "democratic" path to power.

From Paris, after a short visit to a Swiss cure, he went on to Berlin, and here, in a room a few steps from the lovely Tiergarten, he settled for the autumn. In the morning he bathed in the Spree, then he went to the State Library, where he passed the day reading all the foreign Marxist literature he could obtain, and in the evening he went to the theatre if something good offered, such as Hauptmann's *Weavers*, or more generally wandered about the streets observing Berlin manners and listening to the German speech, now become somewhat more familiar to him than it was at the time of his unhappy conflict with the conductor on the Austrian train. To the museums and galleries, the various "attractions" of the city, he confessed himself indifferent, preferring to slip into the more modest beerhouses and watch the German workers enjoying themselves, or to go to some Socialist meeting in a workers' quarter. His mother, overjoyed to hear from him that he was well and contented, wrote urging him to stay abroad, where he would run no danger of arrest. He answered cautiously, disguising his words for the sake of the post-office spy, but none the less clearly: "As for staying here a long time, I am not thinking of it. 'It's good to be asked out, but it's even better to stop at home'" ; with which

homely proverb he indicated that he had work to do, and was coming back to do it.

Perhaps before returning he had thought of going to London, to visit the Mecca of all Socialists and political exiles—133 Regent's Park Road, the home of Frederick Engels. But the old "general" of the world revolutionary movement died on August 5th and his ashes were scattered into the sea off Beachy Head, in accordance with his last command. So, seated in the Berlin library, Lenin instead put pen to paper to write for the Russian workers in praise of their dead leader. "What a light of reason has gone out, what a heart has ceased to beat!" were the verses he placed at the head of his article. Its last paragraph dealt with the views of Marx and Engels on Russia, with their desire for a revolution in Russia which should deal a mortal blow to European reaction and increase the power of the European working class. "The Russian revolutionaries," concluded Lenin, "have lost in him their best friend. Eternal memory to Frederick Engels, great fighter and teacher of the proletariat!" A few months ago in Paris, Lafargue, perhaps already bitter with the knowledge of the approaching end of his friend and teacher, had permitted himself to doubt if anyone really understood Marx and Engels. Had he been able to read this article, he might have realised that the same unassuming young man to whom he had made his ironical comment was the one Socialist in Europe who did understand Marx and Engels, that he was to pass on this understanding to millions, making in Russia the greatest monument that exists in history to the memory of any two men.

On September 16th Lenin packed his trunk and left the little room over the Tiergarten to return home. He was no ordinary young man returning to his native land after the usual "grand tour" of the continent, and his trunk was no ordinary trunk. It had a double bottom, and contained illegal Marxist literature. Despite the attention paid him by the customs, he passed safely through, and arrived back in St. Petersburg. Here he hired a room, began to

think of "taking up" the law again, and made careful entries of his modest household expenses in a note-book. But these minor cares concealed a new purpose and the beginning of a new phase in his life.

## CHAPTER V

### ARREST AND EXILE

WITHIN a few days of his return Lenin was taking the first steps towards the formation of the Social Democratic Party which had been agreed on with the leaders abroad. He travelled, an inconspicuous little man, inconspicuously passing from town to town, to Vilna, to Moscow, to the textile centre of Orekhovo-Zuevo, and in each town met secretly the local Social Democrats and discussed with them the results of his trip abroad. In a letter to Axelrod in Zürich he gives an account of this first organising tour, the names of the towns being written in figure cipher and of persons in code. Particularly interesting is the impression made on him by the new textile towns of the Moscow province, Russian Oldhams and Burnleys. "These places one so often comes upon in the central industrial region are extremely original," he writes. "A purely factory town, with tens of thousands of inhabitants who live only by means of the factory. The factory administration is the only authority. The factory office 'administers' the town. The division of the people into workers and bourgeoisie is of the sharpest."

Back again in St. Petersburg he set to work to organise the "Union of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class." Among those who helped him were Krzhizhanovsky, later to be responsible for carrying into action one of the most splendid of Lenin's "dreams," the electrification of Russia; N. K. Krupskaya, who was soon to become his wife; and Martov, later to be his political adversary and a leader of the Mensheviks.

There was plenty of work for them to do. The workers in



the great Thornton factory were seething with unrest. If only full information could be gleaned as to their conditions, the Social Democrats might succeed in calling them out on strike, and with the utmost patience and perseverance they set to work to obtain the information. Friendly workers were cross-examined. Krupskaya and a friend went in disguise into the women's barracks to glean at first-hand an idea of the conditions. The legal night schools for workers were used also, and finally Lenin had enough information to permit him to write a leaflet with an appeal to the Thornton workers, who in November had at last come out on strike. Contacts were made with workers from many other factories, leaflets issued, a pamphlet exposing the new law "limiting" fines was written by Lenin and illegally printed, and finally material was carefully collected for the first issue of what was intended to be the first Social Democratic newspaper in Russia—the *Workers' Cause*.

But Lenin was already an object of marked attention for the street-walkers and window-peerers of the political police. When he crossed the frontier, his trunk had been turned upside-down, tapped to discover the double-bottom, and treated with such doubt that its owner had already given himself up for lost. When at last it was returned to him, he had more than a suspicion that its secret was guessed and that it was only handed back in order to follow to whom its contents were to be delivered, a favourite trick of the political police.

Now he was being continually watched by plain-clothes men, and giving them the slip became a kind of game with him, but it was a game marred by the certain consciousness that the clumsy police-spies could put an end to it when they pleased, by arresting him and all those of his circle whom they had succeeded in tracing, either by their own clumsy efforts or through the more sinister means of traitors within the organisation. Knowing that the blow was bound to fall soon, Lenin took the precaution of warning his sisters not on any account to allow his mother to come

to Petersburg if he should be arrested. He did not want her once more to have to go through the humiliation of trailing from department to department of the various Ministries to make requests of one sort or another for her son.

The inner, illegal organisation, "the elders," were free from *provocateurs*, but among the group of "young men," the students who formed the legal following of the Social Democrats among the Petersburg intellectuals, they knew quite well there was a spy—the dentist Mikhailov. Arrested with a group of students and workers some time before, Mikhailov had been released and allowed to remain in the capital while all his companions were sent into exile. This had made him suspect, but his indiscreet questions and efforts to get at the identity and connections of the "elders," especially their connections with the workers, made the suspicion a certainty. Mikhailov sent for Martov in order to demand an "explanation," before witnesses, of these suspicions. Martov coldly offered him an arbitration court, the usual method among illegal workers of settling such questions, and left the room, but left with the conviction that Mikhailov had betrayed them and that arrests might be expected at any moment.

Lenin, in his little room, through the thin wall of which he only too often heard the loud voice and strumming balalaika of his neighbour, was desperately trying to complete the material for the first number of the *Workers' Cause*. It was done at last, most of it compiled and written by himself, and the copy handed to Vanyev, who was to see to its printing in the illegal plant of the Populists. Another set of the copy he gave to Krupskaya, and all other traces were carefully destroyed.

The copy was handed over at a meeting of the editorial board at Krupskaya's flat on the evening of December 8th, where every word was carefully read. Vanyev was to make the last corrections that same night and hand them to Krupskaya in the morning. But, in the morning, Vanyev was not to be found at home, and Krupskaya, alarmed,

hurried to the friend's at whose flat Lenin usually had dinner. He had not been in to dinner. It was clear that the police had struck and that both Lenin and Vanyev were arrested. The best of the group, in the early hours of the morning of the 9th, had all been taken.

The police thought they had crushed the new party at birth, but they were mistaken. When Krupskaya went to her evening school, one of the workers, Babushkin, drew her aside into a corner under the stairs and handed her a leaflet on the arrests which the workers themselves had written. When she took it to the intellectuals, now led by Martov, they were embarrassed at its boldness, for it was a direct political appeal. However, as the workers had written it themselves, the intellectuals could hardly condemn it as being too advanced for the Petersburg proletariat, so they reluctantly agreed to publication. Indeed the arrests made a stir among the factory workers, and the premises of the dentist Mikhailov were quietly and efficiently smashed to pieces by a determined group who disappeared without leaving a trace as to their identity.

The prisoners had been sent to the "house of preliminary detention." Preliminary detention might mean anything from a few weeks to two or three years, for Lenin it was to be exactly one year and two months. As to what the detention was preliminary to, there was no doubt that it would be a more or less lengthy exile in Siberia or North Russia. About three weeks after his arrest, Lenin was called out of his cell for his first examination. To judge by his replies, it troubled him very little, and Lieutenant-Colonel Klykov of the gendarmerie, and the assistant prosecutor Kichin, must have felt more than ordinarily exasperated by the calm indifference of the little man who faced them with such contempt.

Asked whether he belonged to the Social Democratic Party, or knew anything of the existence of anti-Governmental parties, he answered simply "in the negative." The manuscript of a leaflet and the written description of

a strike found in his room were there "accidentally," being "borrowed to read from a person whose name I cannot remember." When the colonel wanted to know if he knew a student named Zaporozhe, Lenin replied that he did not wish to answer any questions whatever about his acquaintances. Then came a number of questions about the trip aboard and the famous trunk. Oh, yes, he had bought books from abroad, but he could only remember the titles of three : a book on the condition of the working class in Bavaria, a treatise on workers' legislation, and the third, was it a novel by Balzac ? Perhaps, but he could not remember now exactly. "As for the trunk, well I did travel with a trunk, but it isn't with me at the moment, and really I can't remember where I left it"—but already the quick mind was thinking of how he could present the gallant lieutenant-colonel with a trunk, since he was so interested in trunks—"perhaps it is in Moscow."

He managed to smuggle out a cipher letter to Krupskaya, telling her to get the family in Moscow to buy a trunk like the famous double-bottomed one in order to present to the police if they pressed their enquiries. But evidently the trunk did not interest them further, though it was characteristic of Lenin's thoroughness that, if the police insisted on a trunk, he was quite ready to furnish them with one. Three more examinations followed, in April, May, and June, though, as one of his fellow prisoners remarked, the process of getting information out of Lenin was like milking Pharaoh's cows—he gave little. He had no relations with any workers. With regard to the manuscript articles and leaflets in his handwriting, he felt unable to give the lieutenant-colonel any information. As to various evidence brought forward concerning himself and his movements, he was afraid he could say nothing until he saw the minutes of the evidence and the names of the witnesses. When the colonel produced for his inspection a letter and a telegram, he did not recognise the handwriting or the contents, and, as they were not sent to his address, he could only suppose they were not for him but for the person to whom they

were addressed (an open mockery of the gendarmes who had spent much pains in tracing his illegal correspondence). He had entered into no relations with Russian *émigrés* abroad, and as for the suggestion that he had met a Russian *émigré* Plekhanov, so far as he knew this Plekhanov lived in Geneva, and as he, Lenin, had never been in Geneva, he could hardly have had any relations with him.

So after each examination he went back to his new "study," to take up again his scientific investigation of the development of capitalism in Russia, or to compose a letter to his comrades in gaol or to his family outside. The cell was 10 ft. by 5 ft. and 6 ft. high. Through its barred window giving on to the prison yard a little piece of grey sky was visible. The furniture was obscenely primitive. In the corner was the closet pan, covered by a tin lid. The iron bed was clamped to the wall and for covering had a straw mattress, a pillow, a Government blanket, and greyish sheets that smelled of prison disinfectants. An iron board was clamped to the wall for a table, and another iron board, smaller and lower, served as a seat. There was a tin bowl, a tin plate, a wooden spoon and mug, a wooden fork but no knife for fear of inconvenient suicides.

Every morning he cleaned the asphalt floor with wax, rubbing it in vigorously, though this was not compulsory for political prisoners, but Lenin wanted exercise and despised a man who could not keep his own room clean. This and a careful régime of physical culture kept him fit, though, in the end, confinement began to tell even on his sturdy frame, his skin took on a yellowish tinge, and he began to cough slightly.

But his was not the temperament which prison life could break down. As his fellow prisoner Lepeshinsky said, in Lenin's character there were so many sunny motives that he never noticed the lack of sun in his cell, while his mental horizon was so wide that he felt no confinement from the prison walls, and the joyous feeling of continual mental creation made up for the lack of human companionship.

For, in prison, Lenin remained the leader of his party.



He had quickly elaborated a means of communication, both for use within the prison and for his comrades outside. Books from various libraries, with single letters marked by pencil dots were the easiest and quickest way, but he varied this by writing in invisible ink made from milk, using, as Krupskaya describes, hollowed pellets of bread for "inkwells." The inkwells could quickly be swallowed if a warder approached, and he writes ironically that in one day he swallowed thus six inkpots. His first letter from prison was one enquiring about the fate of his comrades. A cleverly arranged list of books in the letter covered their revolutionary nicknames, and a reply a few days later in the same code gave him an exact idea of the state of the new-born organisation. The great wave of strikes that swept St. Petersburg in 1896 provided him with the material for a pamphlet *On Strikes*, which he successfully smuggled out of prison, but unfortunately a police raid on the printing plant where it was being set up, lost it for ever. However, Lenin was later to have the satisfaction of knowing that, if the pamphlet was lost, he had nevertheless been able to influence the strike movement in another way.

May Day was approaching. It was essential for the Social Democrats to show the workers and the Government that they were not crushed, even though their leaders were sitting in prison. Laboriously the imprisoned leader set to work to write out in milk, in the brief intervals when the warders were in chapel with the criminal prisoners, a manifesto on *The Workers' Holiday of the First of May*. The manifesto was simple, its meaning clear so that he who ran might read, and such illegal leaflets were literally "read on the run." The capitalists keep the workers in ignorance, cut their wages, lengthen their hours, fine them, dismiss them at will. No one helps the workers save the workers themselves, unity and resistance to their employers are their best defence. The strikes at various factories (in which Lenin had taken a part as agitator) are signs that the workers are awakening. The members of the "Union" call on the Petersburg workers to join them in breaking

the chains by which the employers and Government hold them. "Workers of all countries, unite. . . ."

And Lenin, sitting in the little cell to which the sun never penetrated, wrote how the workers of France, Germany, and England left their work on May Day to demonstrate for their future victory. The martial music of the demonstrations was in his ears as he wrote, it is in the leaflet also. The time will come, he concluded, when our muscular arm will be lifted and the chains will fall, when the working people arise over the Russian land, to the confusion of the capitalists and the Government which so faithfully serves them.

The leaflet was mimeographed and 2,000 copies distributed—for those days a tremendous number. It was read eagerly, and, when the strike wave began a few weeks later, it was those factories which had been most completely supplied with Lenin's leaflet which resisted longest. This was the greatest achievement the Social Democrats could point to yet. So great was the strike movement that summer that the Government was twice compelled to issue official statements to minimise its importance and attack the "evil-disposed persons," i.e. the Social Democrats, who were attempting to make use of these "insignificant" disagreements between masters and workmen. That the work of these "evil-disposed persons" was one of the causes of the depth and obstinacy of the strikes was evident from the fact that the Government was for the first time forced officially to acknowledge the existence in Russia of class battles and of revolutionary Socialism. They did not realise, however, that the directing mind of the "evil-disposed persons" was sitting, secure from their spies, in one of the Tsar's own prisons, and, when at the end of the year an illegal proclamation "To the Tsar's Government" was circulated, still less did they guess that a grimly patient revolutionary had written out in milk this reply to the Government's attacks on his party and smuggled it out of prison. Lenin's quick wit soon recognised the irony of his position, and when his sister remonstrated with him on the great danger he ran

with his clandestine agitation, he answered : " Well, I'm in a better position than most of the citizens of the Russian Empire—they can't catch me."

He worked every day on the blue books and statistical reports which were obtained for him from the Petersburg library, quickly accumulating the material for his history of the development of capitalism in Russia, which was to be the theoretical justification for the development in Russia of a Social Democratic Party. At the same time, on the basis of the scientific material, he began a sketch of a programme for the new party and smuggled it out of prison together with some explanatory notes. When the time came at last to leave for exile, he exclaimed with pathetic humour, " A pity they are letting me out so soon, I want to work at my book for a little longer and it is hard to get materials in Siberia."

Nevertheless, even on Lenin the solitary confinement had begun to tell. Krupskaya relates how he discovered that from a window in the corridor on the way to exercise a tiny scrap of the pavement outside was visible. Would she not stand there at a given time each day ? . . . The longing for the presence of a beloved face was becoming irresistible. But nothing could be seen in fact, and she stood with a friend for some days in vain. Then, in August, she herself was arrested.

After this, life must have become heavy, but Lenin continued to worry more about his fellow prisoners than himself. His code notes mentioned that one of his comrades was feeling the loneliness of confinement and that a "*fiancée*" must be found to visit him. Another comrade needed warm boots ; yet another was becoming nervous and feeling bad, he should be specially visited and cheered. Sometimes also the correspondence went wrong, and a diversion was provided in trying to decipher the indecipherable. Once Lenin got a letter from Krzhizhanovsky, as he supposed, and spent weeks trying to decipher the library book in which it was contained. With his usual persistence he succeeded, only to find he had got the wrong book and that he had been

wracking his brains over two ordinary criminals' letters.

The end came at last. There came "the highest command": to exile Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov to Eastern Siberia for three years under police supervision. Yet another stage in his revolutionary life was beginning.

## CHAPTER VI

### SIBERIA

THE PRISONERS were released on February 26th and allowed three days freedom in Petersburg before starting on the long journey to Siberia. They made full use of it. A secret meeting was called with the legal "younger" members of the Union who had remained at liberty, and a hot discussion between the "elders" and the "young men" took place—between the uncompromising revolutionaries just released from a year and a half of solitary confinement, and facing many more years of exile in the wastes of Siberia, and the respectable young students who hoped to make of the Russian Labour movement an imitation of the English trade unions.

For the year in prison had put an impassable barrier between the two sections. Between the "elders" and the "youth" there was little difference in age, but in their conceptions of Marxism, of the future of the working class, they were already living in different worlds. The legalist section of the Union wished to confine their agitation to building up strong economic organisations of the workers. In politics they were content to follow the Liberal opposition, and it can be imagined with what fury Lenin fell upon these disciples of Sidney Webb and Edward Bernstein, the representatives inside the Labour movement of that smug middle-class philistinism which he hated above all things. He had not yet read Bernstein's book *The Road to Socialism* nor were the Webbs more than a name to him, but the thing they stood for was the thing he hated; the sickly patronising embrace of the old world upon the new, an embrace which would prevent it from growing,



developing, crashing with full strength into the light of the revolutionary day.

During the time he had sat in prison the strike wave had proved to all who could see the writing on the wall that Populism as a political creed was doomed, but another enemy had been born, more dangerous because closer to the workers in appearance, pretending to the same Marxist philosophy as Lenin and Plekhanov professed, but a castrated, vulgarised, Sunday-school Marxism which those two masculine old revolutionaries, Marx and Engels, would never have recognised as their own offspring. Mrs. Sidney Webb relates how, about the same time as Lenin was entering upon his life as a professional revolutionary, she called to see Marx's daughter Eleanor in order to find out what this "Socialism" was all about. She did not understand anything of what Eleanor told her in such fiercely vehement tones, and came away with the feeling that she had been in contact with some vigorous and elemental force, which, like most vigorous and elemental things, had to be recognised as interesting, but not "quite nice." For the rest of his life Lenin was also to be "not quite nice" to his opponents in the Socialist movement.

With what feelings of bitterness the prisoners started out on the weary journey to Siberia we do not quite know. They had left a movement full of life and energy and came back to find a group of intellectual young professors. The noise of the two evenings' discussions got abroad, and the police never again allowed such liberties to political prisoners.

At Moscow Lenin rejoined his family, again for three days, to find that his mother had secured for him the permission to travel to Krasnoyarsk at his own expense instead of in the wearisome prison "stages" of the exiles' road. Such a privilege was little to his liking and he asked to be re-arrested that he might share the privations of his comrades. But the other Petersburg prisoners had not arrived and the Moscow police, summoning Lenin to their headquarters, told him that he must either there and then go

back to prison or else set off the next day. To go back to prison when the others had not arrived meant that he might travel to Siberia without them after all, and all his chivalry be in vain. Common sense prevailed and on March 6th he said good-bye once more to his mother and the family and set out for Siberia.

His place of exile was to be the village of Shushenskoi, in the district of Minusinsk, not far from the great Yenesei river and on the edge of the Siberian "*taiga*," the wilderness of forest and mountain that fills the north of that immense land. As far as the river Ob the journey was by train. From there he went on horseback to Krasnoyarsk. Here he had to stay till his place of exile was finally determined, and he passed the time characteristically in the library of the wealthy Siberian merchant Yudin, walking out from the town two miles and back each day, strengthening his nerves and resting his body after the stress of his long confinement. Here at length his comrades arrived, pale and worn out by their long journey on the exiles' "stages." Together they went on the last stage of their journey to the little town of Minusinsk on the Yenesei, where they parted again for the villages in which they were to be buried alive for three years.

Shushenskoi—"Shu-Shu-Shu," as Lenin jokingly called it—lay by a little tributary of the Yenesei, a mile or two from the forest and within sight of the snow-covered Sayanskiye mountains—"So that from the artistic point of view there is something ; and not for nothing, while still in Krasnoyarsk, did I compose a poem : 'In Shu-Shu, at Sayan's foot . . .' but unfortunately I never composed any further than the first verse," he writes home ironically. Here then, in this straggling village by the side of the stream, he settled to live for the next three years, and was content. He determined that Siberia should not work on his nerves and leave him a querulous neurasthenic, as it did so many others who allowed the loneliness and lack of company to overcome them. He settled down to organise his new life.

Eight roubles a month (16s.) was what the Government allowed him for food, clothes, and lodging. Therefore it was not bad to be in a village where living was cheap, and there were advantages too in being away from the exiles' society in the little Siberian towns, hot-beds of scandal, nervous recrimination, and mental degeneration. He would work, to a strict programme, as was his custom, and make the most of the wonderful Siberian air. There was game to be found on the river banks and in the forest, and in the fabled *taiga* were bears, reindeer, wild goats, squirrel, and sable. While, in the near future, there was something else to look forward to : the coming of Krupskaya, soon to be released from prison.

This was one side of his exile. There was another. Lenin had no intention, because he was temporarily shut away for three years in the deepest wilds of Siberia, of abandoning his revolutionary work. Connections had to be formed with the comrades left in Petersburg, and through them with Plekhanov and Axelrod abroad. The receipt of illegal literature, both Russian and foreign, must be arranged, and, finally, his own scientific work continued with the same energy and diligence he had given to it in prison. He had no objection to his "Shu-Shu-Shu," and, while other exiles longed for even such a caricature of town life as was afforded by Minusinsk or Krasnoyarsk, he was glad of the quiet, the fine air, the chance for uninterrupted work and freedom from the petty if tragic intrigues of the exiles' life.

That first winter, which he passed in complete loneliness, save for one autumn visit to Minusinsk, he made great strides with the *Development of Capitalism*, carried on his journalistic struggle against Populism, and prepared his first draft of a programme for a Russian Socialist Party, which he then sent, secretly, abroad to Plekhanov.

Almost his only neighbours were Siberian peasants, hunters, and fishers, except for two exiled working men. The relations between the peasants and the exiles were as a rule those of mutual toleration, but mutual toleration was

not an atmosphere in which Lenin thrived. His was perhaps the most concrete human mind of any time, the one that most loved reality, that absorbed reality as the lungs take in and respire the air. And in Russia the all-pervading reality was the peasant ; his sheepskin smell clung to the railway-stations, his springless carts invaded the scattered towns, his huts of mud and thatch and his strips of land saved the vast steppe from utter loneliness. In Shu-Shu-Shu, Lenin set himself again to study the Russian peasant, not this time the toil-ridden, famine-stricken peasant of the Volga, but the relatively well-to-do Siberian hunter and farmer.

His knowledge of the law was at their disposal for nothing, and they made full use of it, crowding to him on Sundays for advice. A worker from the gold-mines, who had been wrongfully dismissed, as a result of Lenin's advice was able to win his case against the mine-owner for compensation and Lenin's fame was firmly established. It was not the first time that he had fought a legal battle victoriously against an overbearing local magnate. In his days of freedom, when he was living in Samara, he had engaged in conflict with the owner of a steam-ferry across the Volga at Syzran, who had tried to monopolise the whole ferrying trade. Lenin, being in a hurry, asked a fisherman to take him over in his boat, as the steamer was not due to start for some time. The fisherman refused, since the ferry-owner would immediately send the steamer out to drive them back. Lenin, on hearing this extraordinary statement, insisted all the more, but sure enough, half way across, the steamer overtook them and against all his protests took them on board.

This was a violation of personal liberty, punishable by law with imprisonment, and Lenin at once laid a complaint against the incredulous and indignant ferry-owner whose sway no one had ever before dared challenge. After a long delay the case was put down for hearing at a small town off the railway exceedingly hard to reach from Samara, evidently in hope the prosecutor would not trouble to appear. But the Russian law, a genius at delay, had met its

match. Though the magistrate twice adjourned the case into the middle of winter, each time the obstinate, red-bearded young lawyer from Samara turned up, and would not be shaken off until the presumptuous ferry-owner was lodged in gaol for a month.

Such a man was after the heart of the Siberian peasants. He did not seek their company, for he had his own reasons for being reserved to those he could not trust absolutely, but they were not long in coming to him and showing towards him a special attention and affection which were rarely given to political exiles. The village shopkeeper, from whom he bought paper and ink, invited him to tea, and over their tea asked him curiously who were these political exiles, and what were they up to?

"You Siberian peasants," he was told in answer, "don't know what want is. You have as much land as you need, but in Russia the people are in terrible want. Often the peasant has so little he has to go to work on the local estate, or else rent land from the landlord, while that very same landlord has hundreds of thousands of acres."

And then Lenin, just as he used to question the Petersburg workers, questioned the Siberian peasant shopkeeper till he knew his whole history in the minutest detail, knew that he didn't own his own stock but took it on commission from a local merchant, that he couldn't keep his books properly, and that life was not so easy for him. Perhaps Lenin would show him how to manage those books? He did, and between them sprang up mutual trust and friendship.

When he felt he could trust the peasant, Lenin spoke more freely to him, explained what capitalism was, laughingly called him a "parasite," and began to interest him deeply in that strange complex called society.

One day, as the shopkeeper sat over his tea in Lenin's room, the window was darkened by the shadow of men in uniform. The assistant prosecutor and two officers of gendarmerie came in, and, without a greeting or taking off their hats, rudely asked for "Ulyanov's study." Lenin quietly pointed to the table heaped with books and papers,



and the search began. The usual official questions were put, and, in a minute or two, before his calm replies, their tone changed, their hats came off; and, to the village shopkeeper who had lived all his life in the conviction that the uniformed officials of the Tsar were only next to the Tsar himself, they all at once seemed very poor sort of creatures in comparison with the political exile, Vladimir Ulyanov, living on eight roubles a month of the Tsar's money. At midnight the gendarmes came to the shopkeeper's house and began to question him as to why he was at Ulyanov's, what kind of conversations he had with him, and who visited there, and what sort of things this Ulyanov said to the peasants.

With village stupidity he answered that he went there for lessons in bookkeeping, that he had no idea who went there besides himself, and that he didn't understand a thing about politics. Moreover, Ulyanov was a reserved sort of chap who would never dream of talking to peasants about a complicated affair like politics. Finally, would the gendarmes please tell him whether there was anything wrong in his knowing Mr. Ulyanov? Should he stop seeing him? Oh, no, they answered. We quite see that he's very useful to you, but just keep an eye, in future, on who goes there and what sort of talk goes on, and keep us informed.

But no working man or peasant ever betrayed Lenin and the shopkeeper Zavertkin was not an exception. The gendarmes were easily fooled into believing that this fellow, in whose troubled mind a vision of another world in which there were to be no village shopkeepers was just awaking, was only another peasant idiot and troubled him no more.

The year closed with the news of the arrest of his younger brother Mitya in Moscow, and then the thick carpet of the Siberian winter cut off all echoes of the outer world. The new year brought him the definite news that Nadezhda Krupskaya, sentenced after her release from prison to three years' exile in the northern provinces, had definitely got permission to live out her exile with him in lonely

Shushenskoi, and he began to look for better quarters in which they could start their life together. The only available rooms were also sought by the village priest, but Lenin defeated the Church and won them for himself. With the breaking of the ice on the Siberian rivers arrived Krupskaya and her mother. They got to Shushenskoi in the evening, to find an empty house. The lonely exile who had awaited them so eagerly through the winter had not been able to resist the call of spring over the half-frozen marshes and had gone with dog and gun to drink the keen Siberian air.

The paternal Government of Nicholas Romanov had given permission to Krupskaya to travel to Siberia instead of to Archangel or some other northern resort only on condition that she immediately got married ! So Lenin must now fill in his days with requests and forms and all the paper stupidity of police bureaucracy in order to hasten on the marriage. Even so it was not till July that all the formalities were overcome and the Government consented that they should become man and wife, and even then their exile friends from the neighbouring villages were not allowed to come to the wedding. There was no "honeymoon" for the re-united couple. In the mornings they sat together working on the translation of Sidney Webb's *Industrial Democracy*, "a very business-like book," and after dinner Lenin wrote his *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, now fast nearing completion. In the evening they would go for a walk with Lenin's hunting-dog, pursued by a plague of mosquitoes whose particular attention was always directed on Lenin rather than on the two women. He tells that it was the only time he ever wore kid gloves, a formality he had neglected in Paris and Berlin !

He liked to talk to Krupskaya and her mother in these evening walks, when the dog Jenka would bark excitedly after some startled hare slipping into the dark undergrowth, about his hunting exploits. But Krupskaya noted that the hunter was not so terrible in deed as in word, for the birds were nesting now and his hunting boots were in the cellar.

Sometimes, however, he would walk with one of his peasant friends, or the two workers in exile with him, to the broad Yenesei, and sit there all night, fishing. But the fishing also proved not a great success though the journey to the river was "wonderful and full of adventures."

The life was idyllic, but Lenin was not the man to live idylls, and it would be idle to imagine that such an existence could satisfy him. For him the struggle, the vast conflict of classes out of which was to emerge the new society, was the only reality. Here in the little country towns of Siberia that life found its only echo in the disputes between the groups of exiles, disputes that it would be foolish to consider the mere fractious quarrels of nervous men and women isolated in a wilderness. No, they were all bound back for the struggle, sooner or later, merely "dead men on leave," and a political debate on the banks of the Yenesei might in a year or two's time have very definite effects on the banks of the Neva.

Minusinsk was the centre where these Siberian exiles met, and very soon after the arrival of Lenin and his companions there arose a bitter division among them. The majority were Populists, intellectuals of the old school, having little patience with these young men who swore by the Germans, Marx and Engels, and had more respect for French or German working-men Socialists than for veterans of the underground struggle against Tsarist terror. Especially did they look down upon the working men among the Marxians. "The street has come into exile," they would exclaim with high disdain. Towards Lenin their attitude was different. In the first place they knew little of him as a Marxian propagandist against Populism, but they did know he was the brother of the martyred terrorist Alexander Ulyanov. Furthermore, Lenin himself treated them with a respect they did not get from all the Marxists, for he admired the revolutionary courage of these older men, and there were men at Minusinsk who were in exile for life for the affair in which his brother was sacrificed. One of these, the old Populist Beznayev, tells of the effect which conversation

with Lenin had upon some of the more approachable of the Populists.

When he came to Minusinsk the spirit of the old exiles was burning low. Their hatred of the Tsar and his bureaucracy remained unquenchable, but their faith in Russia's future was evaporating. All their high courage, all the noble blood spilled, seemed in vain, and in this wretched little town on the edge of the arctic night it appeared as though Russia was really condemned to decay for ever under the most brutally stupid bureaucracy the world had yet known. But the younger Ulyanov, full of fire and courage, with a strange philosophy they did not understand, brought new hope. He proved to them that the work begun by Jeliabov, Sophia Perovskaya, and Stephen Halperin did not die with their heroes on the scaffold. New people, a new class had been born, to whom the grand and not far distant future belonged. "Lenin, warm, convincing, relit in our hearts fresh fires, new faith," wrote Beznayev.

But this was in the nature of an Indian summer. Between the two generations, the two classes, there could be no real peace. Open war broke out over the disappearance of the Social Democrat Raiching, who had fled from exile for party purposes, with the consequence that the police stopped many of the privileges of the exiles. For the Populists this was a terrible breach of the code of good behaviour, and they demanded an exiles' court to judge the question. The meeting took place in June 1898, and resulted in a complete break between the Marxists and the Populists. The latter proved quite unable to understand the new men's conception of party and party duties, could not see that, if party needs required the temporary discomfort of a few people, those few people should be sacrificed. But behind the Raiching affair was a whole long story of political dispute, and fundamental disagreement.

Close on this followed a more tragic affair. At the end of June came the news that N. E. Fedoseyev, with whom Lenin had kept up constant correspondence, had shot himself. Fedoseyev, the teacher of Gorky, in some ways perhaps the

teacher of Lenin also, was the most gifted and devoted of all the little group of Socialists, and the manner of his end was a bitter blow. The tragedy was deepened by the news that his beloved friend M. G. Hopfenhaus, who was Lenin's connecting link with Fedoseyev, had also shot herself on hearing of his death. Lenin wrote to his sister Anna, when all the details became known to him : " A terrible thing, this tragic story ! And the mad slanders of a scoundrel called Yuhotsky (a *political* !!! exile in Verholensk) played the chief part in that last act. N. E. was terribly shaken and depressed by them. He therefore decided to take *no* help from *anyone* and underwent terrible hardships. They say that two or three days before his death he got a letter which repeated the slanders. The devil knows what kind of things ! The worst of all in an exile's life is these ' exiles ' stories,' but I never thought they could go to such lengths ! The slanderer was long ago exposed and condemned by all the comrades, and I never thought that N. E. (who had some experience of exiles' stories) would take it all so to heart." Fedoseyev had been accused by this Yuhotsky of taking money collected for the general needs of the exiles. As soon as he heard the accusation, he gave up every penny to which he was entitled from party funds and literary work, and lived only on the eight roubles (16s.) a month allowed by the Government. The consequent hardships, following on his prison life, deprived him of all capacity for work, and, when he could not work any longer, he shot himself.

Such petty treacheries and intrigues are a part of the heavy price in human nerves that the exiles paid. Lenin rarely wrote with such personal indignation as in the letter quoted, and it can be understood with what relief, after such a tragedy, he would return to his Shu-Shu-Shu, with its books and hunting. But he was not left for long in peace. The news of the changes then taking place inside the European Socialist movement, of the renouncing by Bernstein of the revolutionary Socialism and materialist philosophy of Marx and Engels, and of the consequent disputes inside the German Social Democratic Party had reached the exiles,



together with copies of Bernstein's book, *The Road to Socialism*. Lenin read it and declared it "unbelievably weak—theoretically the repetition of other people's thoughts. Phrases about criticism, without any attempt at serious, independent criticism. In practice, opportunism (Fabianism, or rather the original of a heap of Bernstein's statements and ideas is to be found in the latest books of the Webbs) . . . and moreover *cowardly* opportunism, for Bernstein does not want to touch the programmes [of Socialism] directly." He observes with even greater indignation that Bernstein declares that many Russians share his point of view, "which completely disgusted us."

Bernstein's book is unreadable to-day, but his position is that of the majority of the Socialist Parties of the old Second International : the position that the class struggle is an old-fashioned idea, and that Socialism as an eventual aim is of little importance in comparison with the "movement" for gradual reforms. This very plain statement that "class-peace" and "gradualism" are the successors of Marxism he covered with a would-be cloak of Kantian idealism that wears pretty shabbily after thirty years. But Bernstein was justified in claiming allies in Russia ; with the arrest and exile of the "old men," the Russian Party had fallen to pieces. The little group of Liberal university intellectuals who had been left behind accepted the Bernstein faith implicitly, and, a few days after he read the German's book, Lenin received another document which disgusted him still more—the credo or profession of faith of those who claimed to represent Russian Marxism. The credo supported the point of view that workers should not interfere in politics, which were the affair of the intellectuals, but satisfy themselves with an economic struggle on the lines of English trade unionism.

The Marxians, under Lenin's leadership, at once held a secret meeting in a neighbouring village, Yermakovsk, and sent a decisive reply to the credo in the name of seventeen exiles, all honoured names in the story of the foundation of Russian Socialism. Their answer, written by Lenin, was

received with joy by Plekhanov and the Swiss exiles, and had its effect in stopping the rot within the movement inside Russia itself. Bernstein's book, the incident with the credo, the collapse of the party inside Russia, set Lenin seriously thinking on the problems of organisation of a real revolutionary party which should be both theoretically strong enough to make mincemeat of the pseudo-scientific reformism of Bernstein and his followers, and organisationally strong enough to withstand the attacks of the Tsar's police.

With his usual energy he set himself to the working out of his plans, working all day, unable to sleep at night for thinking over every single point, losing the splendid health the Siberian air had given him, growing once more thin and ailing. His idea was to start an organ abroad and centre on it the party leadership. The paper was to be connected as closely as possible with the different organisations and groups in Russia. It must be transported so secretly and efficiently over the frontiers that there should be no chance of these connections breaking down or being hampered through the action of the police. Every single point, as it was turned over in his mind, was discussed then with his wife Krupskaya and his comrade Krzhizhanovsky. Then the ideas had to be sent to a wider circle of party comrades, which could only be done by letter, and a long illegal correspondence with Martov, Potresev, and others was begun.

In the midst of all these cares, the police arrived to search the house. They had seized the receipt of a letter sent to Lenin concerning the collection of money for a monument to Fedoseyev. This letter they found and discovered nothing in it of any interest to them, as in the other correspondence they examined. But on the bottom shelf of the bookcase, among Krupskaya's little library of works on education, was all the illegal correspondence with their fellow exiles, all the plans for the new paper worked out with such care and pains. Only Lenin's quick wit saved them. He politely offered the officers a chair, the better to reach the top shelf, and by the time the exhausted gendarmes had scanned all

his statistical material and scientific works they were ready to believe that the bottom shelf was really devoted only to Montessori and Pestalozzi. They went, and the birth of the new party was assured, the party which was in time to smash to pieces the police State of Nicholas.

If the latter part of his exile was occupied only with thoughts of the work to be done on his release, the first part was fully taken up by the writing of his book, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. He wrote the last sentence on February 11th, 1899. It does for Russia something of what Volume I of Marx's *Capital* did for English capitalism, describes with great minuteness of detail the process of breaking up the old peasant economy by the growth of capitalist industry and of capitalist relations in agriculture. It had a narrower polemical aim than *Capital*, for it was not a criticism of bourgeois political economy as a whole but of the Populist conception of the development of the Russian village along "non-capitalist" lines. With immense wealth of statistics and scientific accuracy, Lenin showed the path of Russian development to be unswervingly capitalistic. His book was written for legal publication, so that he was unable to draw any political conclusions, but it became the theoretical foundation for the Bolshevik conception of the coming Russian Revolution. In a country where the peasantry was the overwhelming mass of the population, and the proletariat still weak in numbers and organisation, that revolution was bound to solve in the first place the problems of the peasantry, to have a bourgeois-democratic character, though such a revolution could only be successfully carried through under the leadership of the working class. As a picture of the effect of the development of capitalism in a semi-feudal agrarian country, and the difficulties experienced in the creation of an internal market, the book is a classic of economic literature. Far from being out of date, its importance to-day, in the light of the social and economic crisis which is shaking countries like China and India, becomes more and more real.

Not content with this great book, which he published

legally under the pseudonym of "V. Ilyin," he carried on the struggle against Populism in articles and pamphlets. Russian Populism, he showed, the "Nihilism" so beloved of English Liberal writers, was nothing but the counterpart in economics and philosophy of European romanticism. Sismondi was its father, and it was nearer to Carlyle, Michelet, and Disraeli than to the advanced thought of capitalist Europe, while its so-called "Socialism" had nothing whatever in common with that Socialism which is the philosophy of the working class throughout the world. The revolutionary democratic character of Populism was caused by the fact that it reflected the ideology of small peasant producers at war against the aristocracy and the relics of serfdom. Populism, riddled by the shot of the Marxists, was temporarily forced out of battle for a refit, and came back clothed as the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party, a full-fledged member of the Second International, with a strong terrorist wing. In the Revolution of 1917, having become the political representative of the richer peasants and village intelligentsia, it went over to the side of counter-revolution, and the bomb and revolver, which in 1905-7 it plied against the officers and officials of Tsardom, were turned against the Bolshevik leaders of the workers' State. It was by the bullet of a woman terrorist of this party that Lenin was struck down in 1918. But in the 90's the battle was still waged with books, and Lenin gave himself up to it with his usual whole-heartedness. Indeed, he writes to his mother and sister that one night he had even dreamed that he met in Paris "Nikolai On," the Populists' chief penman, and hotly discussed with him some point on natural economy!

The scientific conscientiousness of his book is beyond all praise. In prison, in exile, for a period of three years he sought for and absorbed every single piece of statistical information that could be obtained on the process of transformation which "Holy Russia" was undergoing. To use statistics is the dry qualification of every professor, but Lenin's approach to the official reports of the Government

bureaucracy was the reverse of academic. For Lenin, statistics had no value in the mass, in the objective, academic sense. They were of no use until they *lived*, unless through the dull bureaucratic exterior could be seen the process beneath, the life they expressed. So, from a collection of figures from the Samara land department, Lenin was able to show that here was no abstraction such as a "village," or "peasantry" in general, but a terrible process of class distinction, of the enriching of one section and the steady pauperisation of another, having its extremest form in the gradual proletarianising of the poorest villagers who are forced to hire themselves out to the richer farmers. Behind his analysis of figures was the result of his own observations, of hundreds of conversations with acquaintances and chance peasants met on his journeyings in the Volga provinces. Conversations of which we know the victims always comically complained that they were as exhausting as a cross-examination !

But the accumulation and careful analysis of facts did not end Lenin's work on his book. He read every page aloud to Krupskaya, to have her opinion on the contents and test the firmness and clarity of the style. He wrote innumerable careful letters of instruction to the friends who were to see the book through the press for him, and himself corrected the proofs with professional accuracy. This was no pedantry but merely an example of his respect for facts, for the hard truths at the bottom of his work, of a desire that no smallest mistake should mar the completeness of his exposition. His reward was that he wrote a classic, republished in 1908, and, since the Revolution of 1917, in such demand that it is almost impossible to keep it in print.

In Shu-Shu-Shu he found the opportunity to begin yet another branch of study in which he was also to prove himself a master. The effort of Bernstein, to revise Marxism not only on its practical basis but in its very philosophy to supersede the revolutionary materialist dialectic of Marx and Engels by a Neo-Kantian idealism, convinced Lenin that he must also qualify himself as a philosopher, more



especially as certain of his comrades were already enmeshed in the abysmal confusions of idealism, considering that this need have no direct effect on their "practical" activity as revolutionaries.

The basis of the attempts to decorate Marxism with a Neo-Kantian figleaf of philosophy lay in the illusion that Marx and Engels had themselves worked out no finished philosophical outlook, and that therefore it was necessary to "complete" their work by developing a "philosophy" for it. Lenin, who himself felt Marxism to represent a "legitimate and inevitable product of the whole of the modern development of philosophy and social science," could not for a moment accept such a point of view. In the summer of 1899 he wrote to Potresev that it was essential to finish once for all with the Neo-Kantians and that he himself in attacking its Russian representative, Struve, had been unable to "refrain" from some remarks on the subject. But, he added, he felt keenly his lack of philosophical education, and, though he could not "refrain" from remarks, he had no intention of writing seriously on philosophical themes until he had taught himself. Lenin's modesty, his knowledge of his own deficiencies, always prevented him plunging into a debate unprepared. However, once the lack was felt, there were no half measures in making it up. He began to read Holbach and Helvetius and then passed over to Kant, and rapidly went through the classics of philosophy. Yet it was to be many years before he ventured to express himself as a philosopher, and only after a special period entirely given up to its study.

With his friends, however, he was not so restrained. F. Lengnik, a fellow exile, had a lively correspondence with him on philosophical questions. Lengnik confesses that in the depression of exile, whence escape, in the absence of an organised party, still seemed impossible, the idealism of Kant and especially the scepticism of Hume seemed very much to harmonise with his mood. With the enthusiasm of a convert to a new faith, Lengnik tried to convert Lenin to

the poetical beauties of the Kantian *Critique of Pure Reason*, and even fell into the extremest scepticism, based on Hume and his disciple Schopenhauer.

Lenin in his answers, fully understanding the fascination of the melancholy Schopenhauer for a yet unripened mind, very tactfully but very definitely came out against both scepticism and Kantian idealism, contrasting them with the joyous and confident philosophy of Marx and Engels. He proved with passion that there can be no limits to human knowledge, which must continually press forward and separate itself from its idealistic, bourgeois husk in proportion to the growth of the revolutionary working-class movement. This growth, Lenin wrote to him, must not only determine the conduct and outlook of the working class itself—an outlook which is clear, joyous, and overwhelming in its simple beauty, but in the most exact way it will also determine the conduct and outlook of its class enemies and compel them to speak in the language of facts and the fire of the barricades in place of cloudy dreams and theories.

Lenin did not confine himself only to economic studies, or to Kant, Hegel, and the French materialists. In the evenings, when he was tired, he would read his favourite Russian poets, Pushkin, Lermontov, Nekrassov. Over and over again he read the novels of Turgeniev and Tolstoy, or Chernishevsky's *What is to be Done?* Zola and Herzen, Tolstoy, Turgeniev, and Chernishevsky were among his favourite writers, and their photographs had an honoured place in his album along with the portraits of relatives and of great revolutionaries. He read quickly, turning over the pages so rapidly that a comrade who saw him reading on a steamer on the Yenesei was moved to ask whether he were reading or merely skipping. "Reading, of course, and very attentively too. The book's worth it," was the answer.

So the years of exile passed slowly by, in reading, in writing, in hunting, in skating, in rare visits to gatherings of fellow exiles. In health, bodily strength, and mental vigour Lenin grew each day. If the monotony was a terrible strain

on his boiling energy, he never, unless towards the end, when freedom was already in sight, showed it or made complaint. Perhaps occasionally a hint of what this isolation meant to such a man can be caught from his letters home, but only the barest hint.

When his sister Marie writes to him from Brussels, he answers half-humorously, "We got out the map at once, and began to look for whereabouts, devil take it, Brussels is. We found it and began to meditate : to put our finger on London, and on Paris, and on Germany, on the very centre of Europe—yes, I envy you. In the first part of my exile I even made up my mind not to take out maps of European Russia and Europe, such a longing got me as I turned them over and began to look at the different black dots on them. But now, it doesn't matter, I have got patience and I look at the map more calmly ; we even often begin dreaming on which of these ' dots ' it would be interesting to drop afterwards. It's bound to be like that in the first half of one's exile, one rather looks backward, but now—forward. Well, *qui vivra verra*, he who lives will see." This was not the mere longing of a man of culture marooned in a half-barbarian snow waste for the comforts of a European capital. It was as much the far more poignant feeling of the soldier who is forced to stand aside from the battle—the black dots for Lenin did not represent cafés, theatres, boulevards, well-dressed and educated men and women, but the battlefields of the European revolution.

So his imprisoned energy found its outlet in redoubled work, in physical sport, skating, hunting, bathing, and walking. The long Siberian winter, with its few hours of daylight, would go to its inevitable end. The day would come when, as the sunset reddened the Sayan Mountains, "looking like Mont Blanc from Lake Geneva," they would hear the calling of the wild swans over the waste of melting snow and know that the spring had come. Lenin would be unable to sit still. Gun in hand, he would make for the forest, the dog Jenka bounding in uncontrollable excitement by his side, and, says Krupskaya, "in my turn also,

as I held the trembling dog, I felt myself gripped by this sudden awakening of nature."

At the New Year the exiles had a gathering in Minusinsk. They had home-made wine from berries, and, as the clock struck twelve, drank toasts to "absent comrades," for the revolution, and for freedom. Like true Russians they sang endlessly to the accompaniment of a guitar. Lenin himself, a Volga man born and bred, loved the slow, sad melodies of the Volga songs, and joined passionately in the singing, though a little out of tune, it must be confessed. When they had exhausted their stock of songs, he would call for "Forward you workers, freedom awaits you," the Polish revolutionary song called "Varshavianka," his favourite, which the Red soldiers in after years were to send ringing over the battlefields of the civil war—from Warsaw itself to the deserts of Turkestan and steppes of Manchuria. He emphasised all the purple patches in his singing, breaking every rule of harmony, but he infected his comrades with his enthusiasm, for, when they finished, they caught him up and threw him in the air.

He took up chess once more, playing with his comrades for hours, when they met, and, when they could not meet, carrying on a match by correspondence! His brother-in-law Elisarov was a champion player who beat Lasker in two games at Moscow, and Lenin, by post, carefully analysed with him every move of these games. Lepeshinsky, who was his chief opponent in the exile games, describes him in a tight corner at the chess-board: "On his great brow, with its characteristic 'Socratic' bumps, beads of sweat were gathering, his head bent low over the board, his eyes immovably fixed on that corner of the board where was concentrated the main strategic point of the fight. . . . Not a muscle moved on that face, literally carved of bone, where the blue veins were stretched taut across the broad temples. . . . If anyone had cried out now: 'Fire! We're on fire! Save yourselves!' he would not have lifted an eyebrow. The aim of his life at the given moment consisted in not surrendering, in holding out, in not recognising himself

beaten. Better die from a hæmorrhage on the brain than surrender, if only you can somehow get out of the difficult position with honour." And indeed it is no exaggeration to say that in these years of prison and exile, the school of the revolutionary, was forged the man who later was able to call checkmate to the whole capitalist world, even though it cost him his life.

The time had come for him to get back on to the real chess-board, to battle with the enemy who appeared so strong, so unshakable, against whom his only weapon was his own deliberate faith in the revolutionary and creative energies of a class which in Russia was still in its first raw youth. The last winter was drawing to a close as in February 1900 he said good-bye to snowbound "Shu-Shu-Shu," and turned his face towards Moscow. Hardly had he gone than the mighty Yenesei burst through its bonds of ice, a symbol of battle and angry release and an impassable barrier between the dreary land of exile and the new life to which he was going.



## Part II

# THE FORGING OF THE PARTY

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## CHAPTER I

### THE KINDLING OF THE "SPARK"

AT UFA, the centre of the Bashkirian country on the borders of Siberia, which you find described in that wonderful picture of the vegetating landlord, Aksakov's *My Childhood*, Lenin and Krupskaya parted. She had still a year to spend in exile. He had to start again that work which had been broken by the years of prison and exile.

He went on to Moscow and Petersburg. In the capital he met Vera Zasulich, the former Populist who was now one of Plekhanov's closest collaborators. She had crossed the frontier on a false passport, and they discussed secretly the great project which Lenin had matured in exile, the paper which was to be the organiser and leader of Russian Socialism. The first step was taken—contact established with the emigrants who would have to publish the paper. The next thing was to set up the Russian organisation which should supply it with funds and information and distribute it. For this purpose he went to Pskov, where a conference of Social Democratic leaders had been arranged.

They came from all parts of Russia, but chiefly from exile. Among those who took part were two men who were later to become famous as leaders of counter-revolution, supporters of the monarchy they were now eagerly seeking to destroy—Peter Struve, later the "Prime Minister" of General Wrangel, and the famous professor Tougan-Baranovsky. They represented the so-called "legal

Marxists," that discontented section of the industrial middle class which had seized on certain aspects of Marxism and made out of them a new philosophy, a justification for the development of capitalism in Russia. Perhaps the only living representative of this current to-day is the President of the Republic of Czecho-Slovakia, Masaryk, where Marxism actually is illegal, and whose armies did such harm to the Soviet Republic in 1919 ! However ironical the development of history, it is relentlessly logical, and there was reason in the presence of the future leaders of counter-revolution at this secret meeting of revolutionaries. They were against Tsarism, which was hindering the development of their class, and they hoped that the aid of the working class would strengthen them in their struggle for democracy. Lenin, at the same time, though he profoundly distrusted Struve and his friends, thought that their support at the moment could only strengthen the proletarian party, which was to come forward now as the only one capable of rallying all the really democratic elements in the country, and which must solve the problems of the bourgeois revolution while passing to the solution of its own. The course of the struggle would, he knew, deliver them quickly enough of Struve and company.

At Pskov the first editorial declaration of policy of the new paper was discussed. It was written by Lenin, contained a sober description of the weak and scattered movement, of the work which the paper must do in unifying and giving it a single ideological direction, of the differences which existed among the Marxists, and of the political tasks of the Social Democratic Party. By combining Socialism with the great spontaneous Labour movement which existed everywhere, the new party was to become a real all-Russian political force, "the vanguard in the fight for democracy and political liberty," the fight which was to clear the way for the fight for Socialism.

The meeting in Pskov agreed that one of their members, Potresev, should go at once to Germany to make the technical arrangements for publication, while Lenin was

elected by the organisation, "Emancipation of Labour," as their Russian delegate at the Second Conference of the Social Democratic Party, which must now be prepared abroad. He applied for, and received, a foreign passport, but was not to get away without an adventure which nearly cost him his liberty again for many a year.

He was not allowed to visit Petersburg without police permission, but he and Martov decided to go there secretly in order to carry through certain necessary steps for the organisation of the new paper. On the streets they were recognised, followed by detectives, and arrested. Lenin had on him 2,000 roubles, which had just been given him for the new paper by a sympathiser, and, far more dangerous, a list of all the foreign connections which had been so carefully worked out. Luckily it was written in invisible ink, and seemed a harmless enough document to his captors. After ten days in prison the two were released and sent back to Pskov.

But the political police were to prove one of the least of the obstacles before him. Perhaps when Lenin crossed the Russian frontier again in the first days of August, making straight for Switzerland, he thought that the way was clear for the realising of the work on which he had set his heart so firmly in the desolate years of exile, the creation of the newspaper which was to be a red-hot spark flung into the tinder-pile of the Russian Empire. Yes, he had already christened it the *Spark*, even before it was born. In his pocket was the declaration of policy agreed on at Pskov. Potresev had gone to Germany some months before to arrange the illegal printing; the money was collected, the connections with Russia were made; there remained only the simplest task of all—to go to Plekhanov, the unchallenged leader of Russian Socialism, their friend and ally, and arrange with him the details of editing.

Yet in this simple seeming conversation the whole enterprise nearly came to disaster. With Potresev he went to Geneva, and from there to the little village of Vezenas, since it was too dangerous to carry on any kind of party

activity in the town, under the eager eyes of the Tsar's police-spies. Plekhanov was not far away, in the village of Corsior, and here, one hot morning at the end of August, they met once again. Plekhanov, a man of immense knowledge and strong intelligence, was the adored leader of his little group, the admired of the whole Socialist International, regarded as sharing with Karl Kautsky the honour of being the greatest successor of Marx and Engels. In character he was more professor than politician, vain, exacting the homage of his disciples, his conversation full of learned wit, merciless in polemic because he felt himself intellectually superior to any opposition, disdainful and capricious ; in short, the man of letters of genius who is all too conscious of his genius. His disciples flattered him in his self-esteem. Vera Zasulich, the former terrorist, a devoted and utterly selfless woman, was his "heroic slave," to use her own words, and in such an atmosphere he passed his emigrant's life, accustomed to having his lightest word accepted as a golden oracle.

Lenin knew all this, for just five years ago he had himself made pilgrimage to this very shrine, and it was not without some trepidation, both of awe before the great leader whom he admired as much as any of them and of burning excitement for the future of his beloved project, that he boarded the little lake steamer with his companion and set out to see him. The very first meeting was like a cold shower on his enthusiasm. They gave Plekhanov the declaration of policy agreed on at Pskov ; he took it without comment and put it in his pocket, returning it a few days later with the remark that it was "opportunistic," but he himself absolutely refused to make alterations. He quarrelled violently with them in regard to their relations with the Liberal Struve, and they left him hurt and bewildered, with the beginning of disillusionment already in them.

The disillusion was to grow as the hot summer days and nights rolled by in angry disputes, the anger mostly coming from the capricious "dictator," and with such unjustified force that even his own disciples, accustomed never to

criticise him, were gloomily silenced. When they gave way to him, he would accept their surrender without comment, as a matter of course. They thought he was manœuvring to place his own conditions on the editorship of the new paper, and then all at once, as they went for an evening walk in the stillness of the mountain woods, he laid his arm affectionately on Lenin's shoulder and declared he was putting no conditions. They were charmed, all their old love for the leader returned, only to be destroyed again the next day as he proceeded to put the very necessary condition that in any paper in which George Valentinovich Plekhanov took part there should be no mistake about who was in charge.

Lenin and his friend felt deceived, disillusioned. After he had left, they paced up and down the little village street, far into the night. Summer lightning flashed through the darkness ; over the mountains the thunder rolled. Their own feelings burst out like a pent-up storm. They decided angrily, sadly, that their project must be abandoned, that they would go back to Russia and inform their comrades of Plekhanov's impossible attitude, ask permission to start all over again, on some other line.

Lenin wrote down his impressions that same week. "It is impossible," he says, "to describe what our feelings were that night. Such mixed, heavy, confused feelings. It was a real drama ; the complete abandonment of the thing which for years we had tended like a favourite child, and with which we had inseparably linked up the whole of our life's work. And all because we were formerly enamoured of Plekhanov. Had we not been so enamoured, had we regarded him more dispassionately, our conduct towards him would have been different. We would not have suffered such disaster, in the literal sense of the word. . . . We had received the bitterest lesson of our lives. Young comrades 'court' an old comrade out of the great love they bear for him—and suddenly he injects into this love an atmosphere of intrigue ! He compels us to feel, not as younger brothers, but as fools to be led by the nose, pawns to be moved about at will."



They walked out next morning "like going to a funeral." Vera Zasulich pleaded with them to bear with Plekhanov, assured them that in working with him all these unpleasant features in his character would not seem so apparent. She pleaded so passionately that Lenin was "profoundly moved, and at times thought I would burst into tears. . . . Words of pity, despair, etc., easily move one to tears at a funeral." After this they had two more conversations with Plekhanov, and before their firmness the giant began to show his feet of clay. Cold at first, and stubborn, he finally capitulated, said that all that had happened was a sad misunderstanding due to irritability, and even embraced Potresev. Lenin left for Nuremberg the same day, to begin the work of issuing the paper, but without great confidence that the alliance would be durable.

So the *Spark* at birth was nearly extinguished. In a storm it was kindled and in a storm it burnt out its brief existence. But not before the work for which it was designed had been done. The little paper, printed secretly by sympathetic workmen in Munich and London, was to be a landmark in history. At the conversations in the little villages by the side of the Swiss lake was worked out a programme of struggle for the creation of a revolutionary party, and even then, as participators in those conversations have emphasised in their recollections, Lenin made it clear that he visualised this fight as an international one, not a mere gathering of Russian revolutionaries working out tactics for their own country. Opportunism, the ideas of the Russian "Economists," the English Fabians, the German followers of Bernstein, was an international disease, and Lenin was quite clear that the Russian working class, because of the revolutionary conditions in their country, was called upon to take the lead in the battle against bourgeois ideas in the workers' movement of the world.

The feeling, too, which all who had come in touch with him in the Petersburg days had expressed—that here was a born leader—was deepened in their conversations and in the busy period which followed of getting the paper going.

Undoubtedly Plekhanov felt it also, and perhaps it partly explains his being so "difficult" over the question of the editorship. When he saw that even such devoted followers of his as Vera Zasulich were falling under Lenin's spell—not openly, and not without a struggle, but nevertheless in secret siding with this strong-willed young man—a kind of pettish bitterness may well have affected him.

Yet we know, from his own description of the conflict with Plekhanov—a description of immense value in understanding his character—that Lenin felt far from confident; that if his appearance impressed all his comrades as that of a man born to lead, he himself approached the conflict with his former leader with much diffidence; that he was both confused and hurt by his reception. If he continued the fight relentlessly, it was because of his burning conviction that he was right, that his beloved plan for which he was battling was something more important than himself and his own feelings. There is a vulgar idea about Lenin that he was a "born dictator," that he loved power, that he used human beings coldly for his own ends, without regard to their own fate. It is a ludicrous travesty of the truth. A leader he was, but his strength as a leader he drew from his overwhelming consciousness of the force he expressed, the spirit of revolt of millions, and towards his comrades he behaved with the greatest consideration. In his whole nature there was not a trace of false egoism. It was this consideration, this feeling that Lenin felt towards his companions as human beings before all, that gave him his tremendous authority. He could make demands on people without end, because everyone knew that he himself did a hundred times more, and that he was not making the demands for his own aims. The man who could have such an intense consciousness of the drama of his clash with Plekhanov was no cold-blooded egoist.

At Munich, Lenin was joined again by Krupskaya. They lived in the flat of a German workman. The family, the worker, his wife, and six children, lived in one small room and the kitchen, and Lenin and Krupskaya lived in the

other. He was busy on another book, his plan for the organisation of a revolutionary party, which was published under the title *What is to be Done?*—the name of Chernishovsky's famous novel. The conditions were not ideal. On the editorial board of the *Spark* there were continual quarrels with Plekhanov, every one of which threw Lenin into a fit of nervous depression, for he hated these conflicts with a man whom he respected and who could only show himself in practical work with the pettiness of a sulky child. In the kitchen the German house *frau* was getting the family dinner ready, with the family helping, while his own wife was forced to get their own dinner prepared in their room, to be ready to use the kitchen stove as soon as their landlady had finished. As he worked, he walked to and fro across the room, struggling with his plan for the party of a new kind which he felt the conditions of modern capitalism demanded for the working class. As he strode across the room from corner to corner he whispered to himself the words he was going to write.

His idea of the future was a very different one from that of the average Socialist intellectual, Fabian or "reformist," with his mechanical view of the smooth, unending rise of capitalism, like a pie baking in an oven, which as soon as it was cooked, brown and appetising, the capitalist, with the polite gesture of a restaurant proprietor, would hand over to the waiting and hungry proletariat. "Here you are, sir; the dish of Socialism you ordered is now ready." The bill would then follow, at luxury prices, and both sides would depart satisfied and in the best of tempers.

"Any fool can bring forth children," he would mutter to himself as he trod the little room, "and to-day the modern Socialists in their wisdom say: 'Any fool can help the spontaneous birth of a new social order.'" Lenin was not "any fool" and saw clearly that capitalism would neither develop peacefully into Socialism, nor yet decline automatically till one day it collapsed of its own rottenness, leaving the workers the rôle of the salvage corps of civilisation. His idea was quite different. The seeds of decline and

decay were at work, but the strongest factor hastening the end of capitalist society was the working class itself, which modern imperialism was concentrating in ever greater numbers and strength, while at the same time it deepened their poverty and slavery through wars, unemployment, perfected forms of mass production. This working class must develop its own conscious will to hasten the end of capitalism by uniting all its most advanced elements into a revolutionary Socialist party, by fighting against all alien ideas in its ranks which tended to perpetuate its subordination to capitalism.

Such a party of "professional revolutionists," men who devoted their whole lives to the organisation of the working class in its struggles against capitalism, had become the supreme aim of his life, to which he devoted his whole energy and mind. This was his dream. H. G. Wells was later to call him "the dreamer of the Kremlin." In the little room at Munich he was not afraid to dream, but not in the sense which the always severely practical Mr. Wells so scornfully condemned. "We ought to be dreaming about our party," he whispered, and then got scared, as he confessed ironically. Can a Marxist dream? It seemed to him he was sitting at a "unity congress" with his political opponents from the camp of reformism, and that one after another they rose to ask him threateningly: "Permit me to enquire, has an autonomous editorial board the right to dream without first obtaining permission of the party committee?" or else, "I go further; I ask, Has a Marxist any right at all to dream, knowing that, according to Marx, man always set himself achievable tasks, and that tactics is a process of growth of tasks, which grow together with the party?"

But Lenin, despite the cold shivers which these hypothetical questions sent down his back, was not without his justification, which he took from the Russian writer Pisarev, who wrote that if man were completely deprived of the ability to let his dreams run ahead of the natural progress of events, "if he could never run ahead and mentally

conceive in an entire and completed picture the results of the work he is only just commencing, then I cannot imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and fatiguing work in the sphere of art, science, and practical work. . . . Divergence between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream, if he attentively observes life, compares his observations with the airy castles he builds, and if, generally speaking, he works conscientiously for the achievement of his fantasies. If there is some connection between dreams and life, then all is well."

The memory of the St. Petersburg circles came back to him as he wrote, with all their amateurishness, their weakness, their inability to rise to the level of the tasks history put before them. "Every member of that circle suffered to the point of torture from the realisation that we were proving ourselves amateurs at a moment in history when we might have been able to say—paraphrasing a well-known epigram: 'Give us an organisation of revolutionists, and we shall overcome the whole of Russia!'"

Yet the making of the organisation was not to prove an easy task. There were already signs that the ever-busy Tsarist police, in alliance with the Kaiser's detectives, were anxiously seeking for the printing-place of the *Spark*. None of the editorial board was living legally in Munich (most of them had Bulgarian passports), and they deemed it safer to move. This time London was the choice. The English Social Democrats, through their leader Harry Quelch, agreed to help with the printing, and in the spring one by one the exiles made their way to London. Lenin and Krupskaya first took one of London's innumerable and atrocious bed-sitting rooms in the dismal neighbourhood of King's Cross, and then, when Krupskaya's mother joined them, two unfurnished rooms off Tottenham Court Road.

The landlady regarded them with the deep suspicion due from a respectable Englishwoman to foreigners in the year 1902. The suspicion was rightly deepened when she saw that the two strangers did not make any effort to make their



rooms like "home," but just bought the minimum of beds, tables, chairs, and bookshelves. They didn't even hang up curtains, the beautiful, dusty, essential lace curtains that hung at every window in the square. It was hardly respectable, and she told them so. Then there was the matter of Krupskaya, who was going about with immodestly undecorated fingers, which seemed to indicate that she was no better than she should be. The good Mrs. Yeo (such was her truly English name) could hardly forbear to point out the consequences which the absence on a female finger of a gold hoop would imply, when that female was living with a man. Mrs. Yeo had to be told very firmly by Dr. Alexeyev that her lodgers had been lawfully wedded for many years, and that any hints to the contrary would lead straight to a libel action. The very mention of the awful word law had a majestic effect. Mrs. Yeo withdrew vanquished. Perhaps she might have been more than ever disturbed had she known that they were married by order of the Tsar himself, but she could hardly have been expected to understand such a rum go as that, still less that the suspiciously negligent Krupskaya was actually a gaolbird.

This latter fact, indeed, sent thrills of horror even down the spines of good English gentlemen Socialists. "Can it be possible that you have really been in prison?" one of them asked her. "If my wife were imprisoned, I can't think what I should do!"

If Mrs. Yeo got used to the Ulyanov family, who were very quiet, Mr. Ulyanov spending most of his time in the British Museum, which couldn't help but have a good influence over him, the other Russians were not so fortunate. They did not know the language, or at least only one of them, the kindly young doctor Alexeyev knew it, and the prospect of an English landlady frightened them more than all the battalions of the Tsar. So they formed a commune, and a commune of Russian intellectuals is a kind of wild exaggeration of Bohemia. Vera Zasulich, for example, when her English lady acquaintances asked her the very important question of how long she cooked her meat,

replied with terrifying logic, "Oh, ten minutes if I'm hungry, two or three hours if I'm not."

Lenin had to visit the commune for one hour every day on editorial questions, but he never stayed for a minute after business was finished. When his old friend, the Petersburg worker Babushkin, came to London, after escaping from prison in Ekaterinoslav, he was put up in the commune. In a few days he effected a complete transformation; rooms were cleaned, the tables covered with paper, the floors ceased to be strewn with communal property. "The Russian intellectual lives in dirt," he told Lenin with humorous contempt. "He doesn't know how to tidy up the mess he makes unless he has a servant!" It was to need three revolutions before Babushkin's fellow workers were to teach the Russian intellectual tidiness. Meanwhile, the reason why Lenin was able to win their unbounded confidence, to express their desires, was because to them he never seemed an "intellectual"—one of that messy, muddled, unstable class who have to-day only left the shadow of themselves in the stories of Goncharov and Chekhov.

The commune, with its constant stream of visitors, mostly escaped or released prisoners, did not recommend itself to the landlord of the house. Half way through the second quarter the landlord gave them notice and the commune collapsed. In 1902, even in Sidmouth Street, Tottenham Court Road, it seemed hardly a decent way of carrying on to be continually having lodgers who weren't lodgers and slept on the floor or the landing. How was the landlord to know that these "Germans" who annoyed him so much were just escaped from the Tsar's prisons, had travelled over Europe by an "underground railway," and were quite penniless? And if he had known, would it have pleased him any the better? Especially if he were to learn also that one of their favourite indoor pastimes, after political discussion, was the manufacture of false passports. Lenin and his wife, on the other hand, the first troubles over wedding-rings and curtains surpassed, lived on

untroubled. They were Mr. and Mrs. Richter, a German lady and gentleman of studious habits, to their landlady, who never suspected that the quiet Mrs. Richter, who spent so much time at home, was very busy ciphering and deciphering a revolutionary party's secret correspondence with Russia.

London at the beginning of the century seemed a strange and terrible town to them as they rode through the East End on bus-tops : the noisy, swarming pavements, the stalls, the gas flares, the multitude of humanity in those endless grey streets, the squalor and even ruin, with the majestic bobby as the only representative of the " culture " so firmly enthroned further west. No wonder the phrase most often on Lenin's lips was " the two nations," for perhaps the contrast has never been more striking than it was then, the moment of the first triumphant roar of the new imperialism, the end of the robber war in South Africa. While Mayfair flaunted a wholly new crop of Johannesburg millionaires, a grim crisis was settling on the industrial regions, and the long lines of patient unemployed, which since the 80's had grown into a regularly recurring feature, were forming again.

Lenin was not interested in English literature : he had no time. Had he been, he might have noticed here also a strange phenomenon. The middle classes had become self-conscious at last, and, like the geese that warned the Romans of coming ruin, cackled their Philistine warnings too in the ears of the new civilisation. Wells and Shaw were in their heyday. Yet another section of the same class, mostly poets, took fright and buried themselves in mysticism or symbolism. From that same bus-top Lenin must have seen, or passed near, the very shed on the dock-side where Ernest Dowson killed himself with dope and drink, and maybe he noticed mad John Davidson sniffing at the East End life and commented with his characteristic " Hm ! hm ! " on the English Philistines and their queer behaviour.

At least in this period he was able to see clearly the motive forces of the society which produced such a strange

culture, and his works from now on are full of references to the classic country of imperialism, particularly to its working-class movement. For he went often to workers' meetings, to Hyde Park, to the Southwell Place Labour Church, or stopped at some dull street corner to listen to the speaker calling to the forces that were to remake this city in a new image. "The English workers breathe Socialism," he remarked to Krupskaya as they came away from one meeting, where a worker had got up to protest against the intellectualisms of a Fabian orator. When young Alexeyev permitted himself an ironical remark once on the continual prophecies of the coming Social Revolution in Hyndman's paper *Justice*, Lenin cut him short at once. "I hope to live to the Socialist Revolution," he said simply, and then added a few far from polite remarks about sceptics. Just as he had no time for the Capitol geese, whether in their Russian or English feathers, so he had no time for anyone who doubted for a moment that there was a force in society which was capable not only of destroying it, but of building another, higher civilisation in which there should be no class differences, no classes.

It was this which made him so different from many of his Russian comrades. They came into the revolutionary movement because in Russia it had general national tasks to solve: the destruction of the Tsarist bureaucracy that choked the life of the people, the freeing of the peasantry from the landlords, the development of industry. They too often forgot what was always in the centre of Lenin's mind—that these tasks could only be solved by the class which was lowest of all in the social scale, and which had its own particular task to perform that went far beyond these national tasks. These Socialist intellectuals mostly left Lenin in the course of time, being blinded by the national side of the movement and passing into the camp of Menshevism and the Liberal bourgeoisie. Lenin remained an international Socialist to the end, as conscious of the revolution in England as he was of the revolution in Russia, and, perhaps for this reason only, able to lead the

Russian Revolution successfully where all the others failed dismally.

One of these others—the most notorious of them, perhaps, who was to win a name in the revolution for a time second only to Lenin's—arrived in London at this time.

Krupskaya was awakened one Sunday morning by loud double knocks on the street door, and, confident that only a Russian could knock in such a fashion so early on a Sunday, hurried down to admit Trotsky. They had heard of this energetic young man, so sure of himself and so fond of listening to his own fiery speech, and she took him up at once to Lenin, just sitting up in bed. Lenin was attracted by him, for supporters of the *Spark* were few among the young intellectuals, and Trotsky had succeeded in making a bold escape from Siberia. Lenin was by no means one of those supermen who never make mistakes in their judgment of their fellow men. On the contrary, his impulsive humanity was constantly leading him into mistakes, for he could not resist energy and enthusiasm in anyone. His virtue was that he was quickly able to correct himself if he were deceived in his judgment, and no false sentiment ever kept him tied to a person after once he had found him out. He was nearly a year finding Trotsky out.

Meanwhile they spent much time together. Lenin loved the view of London from Primrose Hill, and the walk down through the Park to the Zoo. As for the Zoo itself, it fascinated him. Trotsky would go with him, but, if we are to judge from his memoirs, he found his chief pleasure in talking of himself, while towards Lenin he felt a kind of patronising superiority. Certainly Lenin was a big man and a party leader, but he was a Russian, a semi-Asiatic from the Volga, while Trotsky was a European, a man who had inherited the culture of ages, and he noted it as an intriguing eccentricity when Lenin, showing him London, carelessly threw out an arm towards the Abbey and said: "Yes, that's their Westminster." Their strangely assorted friendship was doomed almost as soon as it began, had they known, for the storms which had been threatening inside



their little organisation from its birth were about to burst. And among the ballast which Lenin had to jettison before he had saved his ship was to be Trotsky.

The differences between the two men only came out when the fundamental questions of the revolution were discussed, but on every one of these questions, till Lenin's death, they proved to be in opposite camps. In a very short time they were to be fighting bitterly over the character of the new party, whether it was to be a party of working class revolutionaries, with a definite programme and philosophy, or a loose organisation of men of many classes and points of view. In 1905 they differed absolutely on the character and motive forces of the revolution, Trotsky believing it to be under the leadership of the Russian bourgeoisie, and that the task of the Russian workers was to form an "opposition" till such time as the European working class should revolt. Trotsky never considered the peasantry anything but a reactionary force, the outlook of the middle-class townsman. Lenin, with Marx and Engels, believed that its poorer and more numerous section would prove a valuable ally and reserve to the working class. On the tactics to be employed after 1905, when Trotsky wished to liquidate the party, on the war, when Trotsky opposed Lenin's slogan of "civil war" and the formation of a new international, after the Revolution of November on the questions of peace, the trade unions, and of the leadership of the Red Army, their policies were completely opposed.

When these things are clearly understood it is possible to understand why Trotsky to-day shares with his former colleague Kautsky the task of chief propagandist against the life work of Lenin. Those who do not know the history of Russia find it hard to believe that Trotsky's membership of the Bolshevik Party was a brief, exceptional period in his life.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SPLIT IN THE PARTY

IN THE summer of 1902 he saw his mother again, and they spent a month resting together on the Breton coast. Then he set to work once more, this time once again on the agrarian question. He became known to the whole Russian emigration by the lectures which he read in Paris and Switzerland in connection with the party's agrarian programme. The famous historian Maxim Kovalevsky, friend of Marx and Engels, after listening to his lecture in Paris, nodded his head sadly. "What a professor we have missed in Vladimir Ilyich," he sighed. There was to be nothing professorial in his immediate activities, for preparations were going forward rapidly for the calling of the party congress which was to accept the programme worked out by Plekhanov and himself after so many nervous disputes and temperamental clashes, the reflection of that fundamental political difference in the two men which was soon to part them for many years.

The congress preparations kept him busy on the Continent till the spring of 1903. Then came a hurried return to London, and a visit to the East End to give a lecture to Russian worker emigrants on the Paris Commune. Sailors, compositors, engineers, tailors, they all knew him well by name and looked to him as their leader. The meeting took place in the room of a Whitechapel public-house, and the landlord cursed them soundly as they left because they did not stop and drink any beer, a temperance due to no anti-alcoholic prejudices, but to the fact that they belonged to an illegal party and even in London observed the strictest rules of conspiracy.

A few weeks later *Iskra*, the *Spark*, was transferred to Geneva and they all left London, keyed up for the congress

which was shortly to take place. The town chosen was Brussels, and here, at the end of July, the delegates met. Lenin had worked for months at its organisation, for it was to see the foundation at last of a real revolutionary Marxist party, based on the programme of *Iskra*, the *Spark*, and cleaned of all those Liberal and semi-Liberal elements against whom he had waged such long war. He had no reason to doubt success. The editorial board of *Iskra*, to which the young Trotsky had been added, was apparently united, and wielded the immense authority of Plekhanov. Opposition might be expected on some points from the Jewish "Bund" and the Polish Social Democrats, but in general he had no doubt of the triumph of the line of the *Spark*. Of the forty-four delegates, only four were workers, but this was an inevitable weakness in Russian circumstances, where only the middle classes could afford the luxury of emigration. It was to be some years yet before the party was able to support the expense of getting its worker members over the frontier.

But the fact was that a number of the delegates had been seriously alarmed at the uncompromising attacks which the *Spark*, under Lenin's leadership, had waged on such "lights" of the Russian intelligentsia as Struve, or the battle which Lenin in person had carried on against the Jewish nationalists of the "Bund," the Jewish Labour Party, who claimed autonomy inside the new party. He argued both before the congress, and in his report on the question during it, that the demand to consider the Jewish problem as a national one was reactionary, playing the game of the religious Zionists and world reaction, who both stood for the isolation of the Jews. With telling force he quoted Renan to the effect that the task of the future was the abolition of all ghettos, and that it was hard to congratulate those who aimed at restoring them, in whatever form. And he closed with the words of Mephistopheles to the student in Goethe's *Faust* : " My dear friend, I advise you, therefore, first of all to learn logic."

But the most important work of the congress came with

the discussion of the next point—the party programme presented by Lenin and Plekhanov. Unlike the programmes of the other Socialist parties of Europe, which had been severely criticised by Marx and Engels in their lifetime, the programme accepted at Geneva was distinguished by its consistent revolutionary character. Alone of the European Socialist parties it contained the essential feature of a revolutionary Marxist programme, the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the absence of which from their famous Erfurt programme Engels had severely criticised the German Social Democrats.

The speech of Plekhanov on this point, in view of the fact that he was to become a bitter opponent of the proletarian dictatorship in 1917, is of more than ironical interest. "The success of the revolution," Plekhanov said, "is the supreme law. And if for the sake of the success of the revolution we should be called upon to limit the action of this or that democratic principle, it would be criminal to hesitate before such a limitation." Citing the example of the bourgeoisie of the Italian republics, who had deprived the nobility of the vote, he pointed out that "the revolutionary proletariat could limit the political rights of the upper classes, just as once the upper classes limited its political rights."

The delegates very soon had a practical proof of how the upper classes limit the political rights of the proletariat. The conference hall was continually surrounded by detectives, both Belgian and Russian, two of the delegates, including Zemlyachka, a woman leader of the armed rising in 1905 and to-day one of the assistant commissaries of transport, were arrested and deported. Rather than risk the identification of all the delegates and the possible deportation of some of them to Russia and the cells of the Tsarist prisons, it was decided to move the congress to London.

Thither, in the hot days of August, they travelled, and renewed their discussions in the grime of the Tottenham Court Road area. Perhaps the oppressive climate of

London in the height of summer made things worse, but from now on the disputes grew sharper, the debates more acrimonious, the cutting wit of Plekhanov more intolerable to those who opposed him. This congress, which was to have witnessed the foundation of the first revolutionary party of the Russian workers, which was to have been the realisation of the dream of so many prisoners and exiles, looked as though it was to end in the ruin of whatever organisation existed.

A deep cleavage became apparent among the delegates, a cleavage which outwardly had nothing to do with questions of principle. Martov, Lenin's friend with whom he had corresponded secretly while both were in exile, his fellow founder of the *Spark*, with whom more than anyone he had shared his plans and dreams, became the leader of a bitter opposition to Lenin and Plekhanov. The division began over the discussion on the first point of the proposed constitution of the party as to who might be a member of the party—those who actually worked in the party or all who sympathised with its aims and programme.

Lenin defended his point of view fiercely against Martov, who would have let in the innumerable middle-class intellectuals, who were full of sympathy for Socialism but had no intention of fighting for it. The paragraph was carried as Lenin had framed it, but it was already clear that there could be no compromise between the two sections. The actual split came over a minor question—that of who should be elected to the new editorial board of the *Spark*. Lenin proposed Plekhanov, Martov, and himself. After long and angry discussions, this was agreed to by a large majority, but Martov refused to join the editorial board. Chief among his supporters in the debates was the youthful Trotsky, now as full of fire and venom against Lenin as a week or two before he had been full of fire for him.

These quarrels, the violent abuse, the long and seemingly abstract wrangles in the terrible atmosphere of the stifling London hall, to-day seem strangely remote. Yet they made history. It was clearly no accident that the young party



was thus to be divided at birth. Some of the delegates themselves seem to have been depressed by the disputes, and Lenin, in his pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, tells of a conversation with one of the wavering and puzzled delegates of the "Centre."

" 'What a depressing atmosphere at our congress,' he complained to me. 'All this fierce fighting, this agitation one against the other, these sharp polemics, this uncomradely attitude !' 'What a fine thing our congress is,' I replied to him. 'Opportunity for open fighting. Opinions expressed. Tendencies revealed. Groups defined. Hands raised. A decision taken. A stage passed through. Forward ! That's what I like ! That's life ! It is something different from the endless, wearying intellectual discussions, which finish, not because people have solved the problem, but simply because they have got tired of talking.' The comrade of the 'Centre' looked on me as though perplexed and shrugged his shoulders. We had spoken in different languages."

The dispute on the first paragraph of the constitution had in fact been a dispute over the kind of party that was to be formed. Lenin, his mind full of the general strike then sweeping South Russia, confident that capitalism was entering its period of decay, wished for a highly organised party of the most advanced and revolutionary workers, able to rouse and lead the industrial workers and to win the confidence of the peasantry. They must first attack autocracy, then capitalism itself. The Mensheviks favoured such types of parties as the era of "peace" had produced in Western Europe, free to all vague sympathisers, which permitted complete freedom to any trend of thought from anti-vaccination to mediæval "guildism." The one thing these parties abominated in unison was revolutionary Socialism. Here in fact were "different languages," from now on to be heard with increasing frequency in the world Labour movement.

The discussion was a big strain on his nerves. While it lasted he could not sleep properly, did not eat. Yet all are agreed that of all the delegates he kept his head

the coolest, that he did everything possible, both then and in the trying months after the congress, to heal the breach. He was the chairman most in demand at the sessions, since he was always perfectly impartial, while Plekhanov could never refrain from interrupting speakers with whom he disagreed, driving them to a frenzy with his wounding wit.

After the weary delegates had scattered once more to their uneasy resting-places in France, Germany, and Switzerland, Lenin was untiring in his efforts to persuade Martov to heal the breach and participate in the editorial work of the *Spark*. At the first meeting between the opponents in Geneva, in September, it was Plekhanov who spoke most bitterly against Martov, Lenin who retained the manner of tact and firm reasonableness which was characteristic of him.

Up to November the arguments continued, carried now into the Congress of the League of Russian Social Democrats abroad, where Lenin and Martov gave reports on the happenings at the congress. It was on the way to this congress that Lenin, engrossed in anxious thought, rode his bicycle into the back of a tram and very nearly had his eye knocked out. When he came to the meeting-place, pale and bandaged, he was attacked by the supporters of the Minority, who were later to become famous in history under the name of Mensheviks, with furious hatred. The bitter dispute was fought out all over again here in Geneva, with this difference—that here the Mensheviks were in a majority. Lenin and his followers indignantly withdrew after the league, on Martov's proposal, had declared itself independent of the Central Committee of the party elected only two months before.

But a heavy blow awaited Lenin. Plekhanov began to waver, to propose concessions to the Opposition. Lenin was ready to make any step to bring about peace, but he would not compromise on matters of principle, as Plekhanov wished. Finally Plekhanov proposed to co-opt, for the sake of peace, all the old Menshevik members back on to the editorial board of the *Spark*. Lenin had no faith in such a

step, and left the editorial board, though emphasising that he was willing to continue his collaboration in the paper and would not do as Martov and his friends had done—boycott it.

With a heavy heart Lenin prepared to give up his creation, the fruit of those lonely winters of planning and hoping on the fringe of the arctic circle. At the beginning of November he handed over to Plekhanov all the editorial affairs of *Iskra*, and it might well have seemed the *Spark* was extinguished—that no fire of revolution, no great light of struggle, had been lit in its brief existence. It went back into the hands of Martov, Potresev, and Vera Zasulich, the old companions who were now arrayed against him. By the end of the month Plekhanov had come out against him also with an open attack on *What is to be Done?* printed in the fifty-second issue of the paper. The break with the old guard was completed, and in December Lenin's last article was printed in the paper—characteristically enough, an attack on that same vague Populism, that extraordinary mixture of middle-class Socialism and peasant reaction which flourished so vigorously in Russian soil, which he had founded *Iskra* to destroy.

The breaking of political relations with Martov and Plekhanov meant also the breaking of personal relations. Yet Lenin was the last person to bear personal malice, and to the end of his days he did not cease to regret the friendship of these men. Both of them died in the early days of the Bolshevik revolution, and to both of them he saw that the honour was paid which was their due as pioneers of the Russian working-class movement. Plekhanov, indeed, was one of the most remarkable Russians of his time. His culture and learning were immense, his philosophical and historical works, his literary criticism, among the most profound of our time. Of all those intellectuals of the end of the nineteenth century who attempted to re-interpret modern culture in the light of Marxism, he was the only one to possess real talent. Beside him Kautsky is a mediocre pedant, vulgariser of history and philosophy.

Yet he was unable to win for himself a place in history as a creator ; he remains an interpreter, though one possessed of the very greatest talents. In addition, his personal faults prevented him from becoming a political leader. Like many men of learning and talent, he was a wit without a sense of humour, one who enjoyed the elaboration of a complicated witticism or pun, to be thrown off without effort, as though it were a creation of natural gaiety, although in fact his wit was all done of a purpose, art for art's sake, as foreign to the natural gaiety of Lenin, which arose from a deep enjoyment of life itself, as the comedy of a Wilde is to the comedy of Molière. So Plekhanov's wit was mostly of the sarcastic, punning, wounding kind, peculiarly irritating to simple or sincere people.

He was, furthermore, vain of his knowledge and his intellectual supremacy, difficult to approach, unless one courted him like a woman, flattering his wit as one flatters beauty. " As a general rule he had a condescending manner towards people," writes Gorky, " as if he were a god. I felt deep respect for him as a very talented writer and the theoretical inspirer of the party, but no sympathy. There was too much of the ' aristocrat ' in him." And Gorky concludes his estimate of Plekhanov with a very profound remark : " I have rarely met two people with less in common than G. V. Plekhanov and V. I. Lenin ; and this was natural. The one was finishing his work of destroying the old world, the other was beginning the construction of a new."

Yet Lenin, years younger than Plekhanov, without the backing of those impressive works of Marxist criticism which had already made the elder man world famous in the Socialist movement, was able to win not only his respect, but his friendship. And Lenin, moreover, was able to understand and make allowances for all the weaknesses of Plekhanov, to give him his full due of admiration, and to feel nothing but the deepest depression after the break had come. It is very doubtful if Plekhanov felt any such depression or deep regret at the severing of a personal friendship. Lenin was a leader, a masterful man, but there probably

never was a man who by nature was less a dictator, a "Bonapartist" in his methods, as his enemies were so fond of accusing him of being.

The year 1904 was in every sense a heavy year for him. The situation in the party was a strange one. Between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks there was an absolute break, yet officially the party was still united. The organisations abroad were largely in the hands of the Mensheviks ; those in Russia, especially the local committees, were Bolshevik ; but the Russian Central Committee, though nominally Bolshevik, was wavering, anxious for conciliation at any price with such great names as Martov, Potresev, and Plekhanov. Inside the Socialist International, those who studied Russian affairs were all against Lenin. Kautsky, whose authority was then immense, wrote against him. Rosa Luxemburg, the leader of the Polish Social-Democracy, the best known opponent of "reformism," whose sympathy might have been expected, came out equally strongly on the side of the Mensheviks.

Lenin had faith in the rank and file of the party, and his chief hope now was to call a third congress, which should finally solve the questions in dispute and rid the party of the wavering or opportunist elements. But the hardest blow was to come. In July the Russian Central Committee members who were in favour of conciliation made a declaration against Lenin, one of the secret points of which was a decision to relieve him of his post of leader of the foreign business of the committee and to allow him to print his works only with the consent of the Central Committee.

His own supporters had apparently renounced him. His paper, to the creation of which he had given so much, in prison and exile, which the stupidity of the all-powerful Russian police had failed to destroy, had fallen a victim to the opportunism of those he had counted his closest friends and was now a weapon against himself and against the revolution. He was not alone, it is true, but the number of his supporters abroad was very few, while communications with Russia were uncertain and difficult. Indeed,



many of the good rank-and-file party members, ill informed about the happenings in London and Geneva, could make neither head nor tail of the dispute, were embarrassed and confused.

It is not to be wondered at that Lenin was driven to bay for a moment. He resigned from the Central Committee, took his rucksack, and went off with his wife into the lakes and mountains of Switzerland. Krupskaya describes their wanderings. "We always selected the wildest paths and got away into the heart of the mountains, far away from human beings. We tramped for a month : each day we never knew where we would be on the morrow ; by the evening we were always so tired that we sank into bed and fell asleep instantaneously. We had very little cash with us, and existed mostly on eggs, cheese, and the like, washed down with wine or spring water. We rarely sat down to a proper dinner. At one little inn run by a Social Democrat, a worker advised us : ' Don't dine with the tourists, but with the coachmen, chauffeurs, and workmen. You will find it twice as cheap and twice as filling.' "

So July passed in resting the wearied nerves, drawing fresh energy from the mountain air. It happened not once but many times in his life that Ilyich grew tired, discouraged, his nerves so worn that he could neither eat nor sleep, and always on such occasions he went back to the mountains, wandering over the broad Alps or the green Carpathians, reading nothing, resolutely refusing to talk politics, until the fighting spirit began to revive, the brain grew sharp and clear again, the imagination to leap and plan.

*Iskra* had been taken from him. Very well, a newspaper must be started, and as soon as they got back from the mountains the remnants of the old guard were called together at a little village on the Lac de Bre, near the station of Chexbres, and the summer nights passed away in planning the mobilisation of the Bolshevik literary forces for the new venture. The offensive must begin at once, and on an international scale. From the mountain air he had

drunk in the fighting spirit of the mountain folk, and his counter-offensive was decisive.

The decision to deprive him of conduct of the party affairs abroad he refused to recognise, and a meeting of twenty-two prominent Bolsheviks met under his direction, to issue a call for a third congress of the party which would give decisive battle to the Mensheviks and those who wanted conciliation with them. Lenin undertook a mass of correspondence with the party organisations in Russia, explaining the Bolshevik position, laying the foundation for the third congress, which he was determined to call. *Iskra* had gone. Very well, a new paper should take its place, and preparations for the issue of *Vperiod* (*Forward*) were begun. No easy task, this last. To find a printer who would risk the persecution of the police, to build up the illegal organisation to smuggle the paper over the frontiers, to have the necessary machinery to distribute it secretly over Russia—all this needed endless care, skill, and patience. It was not till January 4th, 1905, the very eve of the revolution, that the first number was ready.

The professional revolutionary, the intellectual or worker who devotes his whole life to the party, was the man on whom Lenin relied for the circulation of this new paper. In a letter to Gusev, a member of the Central Committee in Petersburg, he gives his conception of the revolutionary's work. "The professional revolutionary must create dozens of fresh contacts in every place, in person give over all the work into their hands, teach them and draw them in, not by lecturing, but by the example of actual work. Then he should go to another place, and in a month or two return to check up his young successors. I assure you that among us there is a kind of idiotic, Philistine, Oblomov-like fear of the youth. I beg you to fight this fear with all your strength." This phrase was typical of Lenin. He could not tolerate the craven spirit which fears the young and the creative, however new and inexperienced, and he saw in this attitude the source of all conservatism, all bureaucracy, all that was irresolute and stupid in the Russian

character, summed up so devastatingly in the chief character of Goncharev's famous novel, the decayed nobleman Oblomov, who has to go through a moral struggle every morning in order to persuade himself to get up. Lenin was in Switzerland, but it was men and women working under the impress of his own resolute energy, moving secretly from place to place, with false passports, who were organising the force that was about to shake the foundations of the Tsar's empire.

Yet 1904, the eve of such tremendous events, was one of the heaviest in Lenin's life, a year of nervous and moral crisis. At the beginning of the year his mother had written from Kiev to tell him that the whole family, his brother and two sisters, had been arrested in that town, leaving her absolutely alone in the world for the time being. The break with Martov and Plekhanov cost him more than he ever confessed, but from time to time a cry from the heart escaped that showed how deep his suffering really was. Schwartz, who had escaped from exile in far and dreary Yakutsk, tried to persuade him to make a general attack on Martov and his supporters. "Very well," Lenin replied. "You have read all the minutes of the congress, you know what our disagreements are, but do you know what our relations were before this with Martov, Potresev, and the others?" Schwartz said he knew. "Then how can I, after all that, after we have been friends carrying through one line together, how can I now, after Martov and his company have betrayed us, stand up with them and carry on a conversation? How shall I speak? After all, I am a human being."

Yet, cost what it might, he made that attack in the end. It is said that just about this time Vera Zasulich, the too-devoted worshipper of Plekhanov, now Lenin's bitterest opponent, heard him give a lecture on the Paris Commune before the Russian colony. As he spoke she muttered involuntarily: "Yes, only a leader can talk like that. He can draw the masses after him." Indeed, it was this year of division and suffering, when he faced the bitterest accusations and the worst betrayals, that completed his character

as a leader of men. If 1904 found him in the lowest depths, 1905 was to prove how the conquest of himself in those depths was to carry him to the greatest heights, though other periods of depression, of bitterness, were to follow in the years to come.

At the end of December, with the first rumblings of the breaking storm in his ears, he would write to a comrade : " Our spirit is rising now, and we are all terribly busy. Yesterday the notice of the issuing of *Forward* came out. All the ' Majority ' is rejoicing and full of courage as never before. At last we have smashed this squabbling and are working in a friendly way with those who want to work and not to make rows. Hurrah ! Keep up your spirits, now we are all reviving and lively. Write me how you are, and, above all, be bold. Remember, you and I are not so old—we are still going forward. . . . "

Still going forward ; but even Lenin could hardly have realised to what depths of tragedy, to what great battles, triumphs, and defeats.

## CHAPTER III

### WAR AND REVOLUTION

THE RUSSIAN workers had advanced far beyond the stage of the Petersburg strikes in the 90's, in which Ilyich had taken such a vigorous part. In Rostov and other towns, in 1902, they had joined in the political demonstrations of the students, fought with the police and the soldiers in the streets, while in the following year all South Russia was swept by a general strike. The workers crowded to forbidden meetings, and the police did not dare to interfere while the Socialist orators for the first time spoke to great masses, challenged the very autocracy itself, sowed the seeds of storm from which the Russian autocracy was to reap a whirlwind.

In the countryside things were no better. Rents and the price of land were rising steeply. On the landlords' farms the crops grew richly and were exported for profitable sale on the markets of Europe. The peasants, oppressed by an intolerable burden of debt, by a hundred restrictions on the use of pasture-land, on the development of their own miserable plots, saw their farms decay, their crops fail, starvation and misery face them. Nor were things improved by the fact that a small section of them was able to flourish, to own little mills, to employ labourers, develop a good orchard, put money in the land bank. The fact that this path of prosperity was closed for the great mass only made their hatred of the landlord more bitter, their hunger for land more urgent, their realisation of the real meaning of the "emancipation" more grimly sullen. In fact they were worse off than in the days of serfdom. They had lost the best land by the terms of the emancipation, they were burdened with debt, while the landlord, even if he could not exchange



them any longer for hunting-dogs, had no obligation to keep them alive. On the other hand the village magistrate, appointed by the local squires, literally and savagely ruled them with the rod, aided by the village constables—another hated innovation.

In the Ukraine, the richest land in Russia, where in many villages the peasant had nothing left to hope for and no fear of death, a peasant rising took place in 1902. The manor houses were burnt, the cry for a distribution of the land was raised, while the superstitious peasants firmly believed that the "Little Father," the Tsar, was on their side, that he would support them against the squires. When the soldiers came, the people refused to believe they would shoot; after the inevitable massacre they said: "Little Father, the Tsar, will punish you for this."

The repression that followed was ghastly in its severity. Men were flogged to the point of death, imprisoned for months, then dragged, half-idiotic, scarcely human to look upon, before the courts to be sentenced to penal servitude in Siberian mines. The appearance of the accused was so awful, the evidence given of so terrible a character, that from time to time the very Public Prosecutor had to ask for an interval so that he might go outside to recover himself.

Plehve, the Tsar's favourite and Prime Minister, the man who won his place by his policy of blood and iron, scornfully declared in 1904 that in Russia the "revolutionary people" was a propagandist's myth. Shortly afterwards he was killed by a bomb in an attempt organised by one of his own agents, the Jew Azev. Azev was in the inner circles of the terrorist Socialist Revolutionary Party, organising attempt after attempt in order to betray the revolutionaries to the political police. How did he come to be responsible for the death of his own master?

Azev could only win the confidence of those he was to betray to death and torture by his own self-sacrifice, his own enthusiasm for the struggle against the aristocracy. There is little doubt that he became to some extent affected by the

ideas of the very people he was betraying and that the action of his superiors became hateful to him. Plehve was the first Minister to organise official pogroms of the Jews as part of his fight against revolution, though actually only a small proportion of the revolutionaries were Jews. The most terrible of these was at Kishinev in Bessarabia, where hundreds of men, women, and children were murdered, a whole quarter looted and burned, many thousand mutilated or wounded. Everyone, from the governor of the province to the commander of the garrison, was in the plot.

The massacre at Kishinev recoiled with terrible force on its perpetrator. Those who knew him say that Azev was like a man possessed when he heard of it, and there is little doubt that it was the occasion for planting in his mind the greatest plot of his whole vile life—the assassination of Plehve.

It was typical of Nicholas and his advisers that for them “the Revolution” was typified by the futile idealists of the bomb and revolver, intellectuals who had no connection with the deep mass movement of the people, who romanticised the peasant and despised the worker. It was because his spies, the prison, and the gallows had decimated the terrorists that Plehve declared so confidently that in Russia there was no “revolutionary people.” Azev’s murder plot was an answer to this boast, but another, more terrible one, was being prepared by history.

The expansion of the Russian Empire to the Far East had brought it into inevitable conflict with the young but vigorous Asiatic capitalism of Japan. For a generation Japan had sought revenge for the humiliation of 1895 when Russia prevented her acquiring any territorial advantage as a result of the Sino-Japanese war. The occupation of Manchuria, the building of a new system of strategic railways, the seizure and fortification of strong points on the Pacific, Port Arthur and Dairen, had aroused intense resistance from Japan. But Russia had powerful backing, not only from the Paris Bourse which directed millions of French capital to Russia, but also from the great

European Powers who saw in her the bulwark against disorder, the gendarme of "civilisation." It is possible that war might have been avoided, or at least been long postponed, had it not been for the incredible greed and folly of Nicholas himself.

The Romanovs were a large family, there were fifty of them to be fed from the imperial purse and a royal prince must live in fitting style. A modern German novelist has wittily referred to the famous imperial ballet school as a barracks for training mistresses for the Grand Dukes' beds. But even a ballet dancer, however well-disciplined, has to be kept in a style befitting a royal mistress. There were also the trips to Europe, the hordes of royal hangers-on to be reckoned with. The budget of the imperial family faced a crisis, and Nicholas, never remarkable for common sense, allowed himself to be drawn by unscrupulous adventurers into the purchase of concessions in Korea.

The concessions may or may not have been valuable, but Japan already regarded Korea as a colony. Russian penetration, the claims of the Tsar, were intolerable. But it was the Court at St. Petersburg which lightheartedly forced on the war in February 1904, believing that this would be a mere parade march for the Russian armies, about whom for some strange reason the legend had grown up that they had never been defeated in battle.

The great and cumbersome war machine got slowly and creakingly into motion. It reached into the farthest villages, putting the peasant lads into the grey greatcoats, slinging on their shoulders, the new magazine rifle they could not handle, moving them by agonising stages towards the long Siberian trek. The line troops, except for the essential stiffening, were kept at home for "emergencies," the town workers were not called up, while the grey masses that poured thickly eastward were made up almost entirely of peasant reservists—ignorant of the modern war machine they were to handle.

They went with the blessing of the Tsar and the priests, after solemn religious services, while the "revolutionary"

middle class, as though they had been caught out in a joke of doubtful taste, hurriedly dropped their "opposition" and stood by with bated breath to watch this first of great modern wars. They felt instinctively that a defeat for Russia would bring them no good, that their factories and businesses would suffer, and that if a revolution were to come it would be no polite palace *coup d'état* but a desperate struggle of armed and hungry masses. And the Japanese, moreover, were Asiatic barbarians.

The Russian steppe can weary the eye, but it is a green pasture compared with the dry plains and barren hills of Manchuria. The climate, though it does not differ much from that of the maritime province of Siberia, is a harsh one for the peasant from the rich Ukraine or the Volga steppes. The struggle which was to be joined in Manchuria was to prove not just a battle of Russian and Japanese capitalism, but a struggle against the heritage of beliefs and ideas the peasants took with them to the battlefield, and, in that second, more dreadful, civil strife, Tsarism all but perished.

Slowly the great armies manœuvred into position, and then, swiftly, unexpectedly, one upon another, the Japanese delivered their blows. A surprise attack, made possible by incredible carelessness, deprived the Tsar's Far Eastern Fleet of its superiority in numbers and blocked it uselessly in the bases. Port Arthur was ringed with fire and steel. The Yalu river, Liao Yeng, Mukden—one after another the exotic names echoed their fatal note in the ears of the Russian people. But two events above all struck home into the hearts of everyone, struck deadly blows at the prestige of the Tsar.

Tsu-shima, the first great naval battle of modern times, was the tragic end of an almost unexampled story. The Baltic Fleet, mobilised at Kronstadt, with four modern battleships, to give it power and superiority over its enemies, manned with crews of reservists from the factory and seaport towns of the Baltic and the Black Sea, sailed to the relief of Port Arthur at the other end of the world. The admiral was a coward and a braggart. The officers so little knew their duty that in the North Sea they mistook Grimsby

trawlers at their nets for Japanese torpedo-boats and opened fire with fatal results. The men had a certain consciousness that the long agony of this unprecedented voyage was useless and would end in disaster. The squadron reached the Far East after Port Arthur had fallen, and was rushed madly and stupidly into action in the Strait of Tsu-shima, where it perished miserably. The admiral saved himself, but 8,000 sailors were burned or gassed, or torn to fragments by exploding magazines, or drowned.

A few months before, Port Arthur had fallen and the two events together decided the war. Russia was driven from the warm Pacific ; the fortress, that was as strong as ten Sevastopols, had given in to an army of barbarian Asiatics. The cup was full.

In his Geneva exile, at this "accursed distance," as he described in one of his articles, Lenin was passionately following events. In an article on "The Fall of Port Arthur," which appeared in the beginning of January 1905, he tore the mask from the war, showed the revolutionary reality beneath, and foretold the struggle that must follow. He quotes an article from the *Frankfurter Zeitung* to show that the opinion of Europe was both shocked and alarmed at the appalling disasters which had culminated in the loss of Port Arthur. "It is not astonishing," he comments, "that the catastrophe to ruling and commanding Russia seems 'terrible' to the whole European bourgeoisie. This catastrophe means a gigantic acceleration of world capitalist development, an acceleration of history, and the bourgeoisie knows very well, knows too well by its own bitter experience, that such an acceleration is an acceleration of the social revolution of the proletariat."

That sentence contains Lenin's whole philosophy of history, and it would seem that history itself, his own life above all, has justified this philosophy.

Not only did the disaster mean the approach of Russian freedom, he argued, but it foreshadowed a new revolutionary movement of the European workers. The outcome of the war was a blow in the face at the smug philistinism



of the European capitalist. You felt so sure that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, so safe in ignoring the suffering of the millions you exploit in Europe and your Asiatic colonies, so positive that yourselves and progress, yourselves and culture, were synonymous, but you had reckoned without the surprises of history, which to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear are not surprises at all, but the inevitable expression of human will and human suffering in deadly conflict with circumstance.

You reckoned, he flings at them, without the weak links in your chain of oppression and misery, without the reality beneath the brutal arrogance of the Russian gendarme, beneath the deferential smile of the newly arrived Japanese younger brother. Very well, history will teach you.

For Lenin saw what was new in the war. "Wars to-day are waged by the peoples," he wrote, "and for this reason the great essence of war to-day stands out with peculiar sharpness : unmasking in action, before the eyes of tens of millions of human beings, that lack of anything in common between the people and the Government, which was formerly clear only to a small conscious minority." He might be summing up in one sharp phrase what the thousands of war books have been seeking in vain to express since 1918.

The military organisation of the Tsar's Empire was bound up in its political and economic organisation. The complete bankruptcy of that organisation must therefore mark the beginning of a political crisis. Not only the intellectuals, the advanced workmen, the students saw through Tsarism, but the hundreds of thousands of peasants in uniform had received a bitter lesson in blood. The story of the collapse would spread to the remotest villages of the Empire. "The surrender of Port Arthur is the prologue to the surrender of Tsarism. The war is far from finished, but every step in its continuation widens the immeasurable ferment and indignation among the Russian people, brings near the occasion of a great new war, a war of the people against autocracy, a war of the proletariat for freedom."

Lenin could not have known when he wrote this that the new war was to begin in a few days' time, begin terribly and tragically with one of the most awful episodes in human history—the Bloody Sunday of January 9th in St. Petersburg.

For some time now a legal trade union organisation of the Russian workers had been permitted, but an organisation of a peculiar kind, for it was controlled and run by the political police. A certain Colonel Zubatov, a man before his time, was the originator of this movement, which had the blessing of the Church and brought into its ranks many thousands of the more backward workers. To-day the idea of trade unions controlled and run by the police causes little comment, for it is indeed the almost universal practice in one form or another. In modern Germany the trade union leaders are the local Police Presidents, in Italy they belong to the Fascist special police, in England they sit on the magistrates' bench or the local Watch Committee.

But the Zubatov unions caused a sensation in Russia. Revolutionaries of all shades of opinion looked upon their organisers as being among the vilest of *provocateurs*, and the Social Democrats alone had the good sense to understand that, despite their leadership, these organisations must inevitably also be drawn into the vortex of class struggle. Zubatov's methods were crude, and he was replaced in 1903 by a young priest, Father George Gapon, the son of rich Ukrainian peasants, a man of little sense and much sentiment, who had the fullest confidence of the political police.

But the war had brought intolerable hardship to the workers, whose wages, both real and material, were falling steadily. The Zubatov unions, the only organisations the workers were allowed, were bound to feel the pressure of mass discontent, while the stupidity of the factory owners, who refused the slightest concession, forced the local branches to defend the interests of their members. The dismissal of two leaders of the union from the Putilov works led to a strike in the giant factory which rapidly spread throughout the city.

Certain of the democratic opposition elements, irritated

at the defeats in the war, decided to make use of the workers to put pressure on the Government, and Gapon was urged to present a petition to the Tsar containing the demands of the workers together with a request for constitutional concessions. The idea of the masses of poverty-stricken workers, with their wives and children, with their holy pictures and religious banners, appealing direct to their "Little Father," was bound to capture the sentimental imagination of Gapon. He went ahead at once with the organisation of the petition, aiming at presenting it on the day of the fall of Port Arthur, the day of national humiliation.

The sequel is known. The Tsar put Petersburg under martial law, placed the Grand Duke Vladimir in supreme command, and made the necessary arrangements for giving the workers of his capital a lesson on good government. Vladimir, so Dr. Dillon, the English confidant of Witte, was informed, was a close student of the French Revolution and had no intention of allowing a repetition in Russia of the events of 1789. He wanted to hang a hundred or so of the "revolutionaries" in public to encourage the others, and his soldiers were instructed to shoot to kill. The peaceful demonstration, with its hymns and holy images, the prayer to the "Little Father," ended in one of the most hideous massacres of our time.

The shots that were fired at the bridges over the Neva, the volleys in the square before the Winter Palace, were the overture to the first Russian Revolution, the death sentence of the régime which ordered them. Lenin heard the news in Geneva the next morning.

"Vladimir Ilyich and I were on our way to the library and met the Lunacharskys," Krupskaya writes. "I remember the figure of Lunacharsky's wife, Anna Alexandrovna, who was so excited that she could not speak, but only helplessly wave her muff. We went where all the Bolsheviks who had heard the Petersburg news were instinctively drawn—to the Lepeshinskys' emigrant restaurant. We wanted to be together. The people gathered there hardly spoke a word to one another, they were so excited. With

tense faces they sang the Revolutionary Funeral March. Everyone was overwhelmed with the thought that the Revolution had already commenced, that the bonds of faith in the Tsar were broken, that now the time was quite near when 'tyranny would fall, and the people will rise up—great, mighty, and free.' ”

In truth, if ever a man condemned himself to death, it was the Tsar Nicholas II on January 9th. The demonstrators had set out in the morning with a religious faith in him as being above class, above party, as indeed their “father.” As the crowds reeled back before the unprovoked volleys, they had only one thought—arms and vengeance. Such stray officers and policemen as came their way met a rough justice, barricades sprang up in the Viburg district the same night, and the Bolshevik workmen of Vassili Island, the heart of working-class Petersburg, seized a print-shop, hastily set up and ran off a manifesto calling on the workers to seize arms. Lenin was in Geneva, but his voice was speaking on the bloody streets of St. Petersburg.

The Tsar had desired to give his people a “lesson.” Going home from that emotional meeting where he heard the news of the “lesson,” from the singing of the Funeral March, Lenin sat down to write an article. He headed it “The Beginning of the Revolution in Russia,” and he bitterly commented that “The lesson was a great one ! The Russian proletariat will not forget that lesson. . . . The working class has received a great lesson in civil war.”

The priest George Gapon, escaping after the first shots and hidden by friends, issued a call to the Petersburg workers. “We have a Tsar no longer ! A river of blood divides the Tsar from the people. Long live the struggle for freedom ! ”

“War is declared in Russia ! ” declared Lenin. “Revolution is war, the only lawful, justifiable, really great war of all the wars known to history.” And he quotes a conversation among a group of workers which an English correspondent overheard on the streets of Moscow. “ ‘Axes ? ’ says one. ‘No, with axes you can do nothing against sabres.

You can't get him with an axe, and with a knife still less. No, we need revolvers, at the very least revolvers, but, still better, guns.' "

Soon afterwards Gapon arrived in Geneva and asked to see Lenin. Perhaps Gapon was a police agent, at least he later suffered the fate of such—ironically enough at the hands of one who was afterwards to become a millionaire concession holder in Palestine. Ilyich nevertheless was eager to know him, for it was more than likely that he was only a partly conscious tool of the police, and in any case all the democratic idealism in Gapon's peasant character was roused by the dreadful events of that Sunday, all his feeling for the hungry masses he had organised, never mind with whose money, and led to their "lesson." For him, indeed, there was no longer a Tsar, he felt as deceived as the most humble of his dupes.

Lenin saw in these events the dramatic confronting of old and new Russia, the agony of the hoary peasant faith in the "Little Father," and the birth of a revolutionary people in the person of the Petersburg workers. He remembered that in hungry England of the 30's, a clergyman, Joseph Rayner Stephens, had called the people to battle at great midnight rallies on the Yorkshire moors, that thousands of yearning, hollow faces, had first felt the pulse of new life when they saw the gleam of the torches on the pikes. Stephens had called to arms in the name of Christianity, declaring his faith in the king and his hatred of the new bourgeoisie. Stephens, like Gapon, disappeared in the rising storm, his place taken by Chartist atheists and revolutionaries like Harney and Ernest Jones. Lenin, seeing all the consequences of Gapon's act, hearing the talk of the workers of Moscow, Petersburg, and Kharkov as clearly as though he were in their midst, remembered that at the end of his book *What is to be Done?* written three years before, were these words: "Imagine a people's revolt. At present all will certainly agree that we must think of it and prepare for it." It had come.

Ilyich could not rest for hours before the meeting with



Gapon. Priest or no priest, spy or no spy, this man was a living part of the revolt of a people. They met in a café, Lenin advised him to educate himself, kept up frequent communication, but had to give up the sentimental, sensation-loving priest. Gapon wished to organise gun-running, and Lenin, who was desperately anxious that the workers should no longer face magazine rifles with knives and axes, gave him the help of the Petersburg organisation. But the idealist revolutionaries were hopeless when it came to practical business, and the Bolshevik workmen who waited for the arms in the Baltic islands, had to go away disappointed.

Krupskaya describes the weaknesses of Gapon, his essential difference from those who were eventually to destroy the Tsar. "To live illegally, to go hungry, and remain totally anonymous, was quite different from speaking at crowded meetings without any risk at all. The organising of gun-running could only be done by people of quite a different revolutionary stamp from Gapon, people prepared to make any unadvertised sacrifices."

Gapon's cargo of rifles disappeared in the mists and shoals of the Baltic. He himself disappeared in the storm he had roused as it blew to hurricane heights. All the world had heard of him before he went, but it is safe to say that no one, apart from his comrades and the Tsar's police, had even heard of the bald little man who advised Gapon to read, and, with a sceptical "Hm, hm!" himself went into the Geneva public library, to pore hour after hour, day after day, over books and pamphlets on the art of war, street fighting, tactics. The romantic priest did not even succeed in landing a cargo of rifles; the little bald man, who was still as unknown when the revolution was over, organised and instructed the fighting men of the armed revolt which flared up in December and smouldered on for two years after.

All through the summer the struggle sullenly gathered force, strikes here, demonstrations there, shootings, repression, alternating panic and cruelty in the imperial villa at

Tsarskoe Selo. Tsu-shima, the last humiliation, came and then it seemed for a moment that the waves which closed over the heads of the murdered sailors would engulf the murderer also. A mutiny broke out in the armoured cruiser *Potemkin* while she was on gunnery practice in the Black Sea. On June 16th the *Potemkin* anchored in the Odessa roadstead, the red flag at her masthead, while the people of the town crowded down in wonder to the port, or thronged the broad and shady avenue on the cliff above the mole. The moment was a dramatic one. There was a general strike in Odessa, the troops had fired on the crowd, everyone's mind was on insurrection, and suddenly the red flag appears in the early morning light at the masthead of the crack ship of the Black Sea squadron. Is there to be now a revolutionary navy as well as a revolutionary army ?

A few days later the news of the mutiny, so carefully suppressed by the censor, leaped over even that "accursed distance" that separated Lenin from his country. He saw at once the immense importance of what had happened, understood in a moment the action which must be taken, the mistakes that were being made. He sent urgently for one of the best of the Bolshevik illegal workers, Vassiliev, who thus relates what followed.

" 'By a decision of the Central Committee you will leave for Odessa to-morrow,' Ilyich began.

" 'I am ready to-day if you want. What is the job ?'

" 'The job is of the most serious character. There is some fear that the Odessa comrades will not succeed in making the right use of the revolt in the battleship *Potemkin*. You must, whatever happens, get a party landed from the ship. Try at all costs to get on board, to convince the sailors they must act decisively. If need be don't hesitate to bombard the Government institutions. We must seize the town. Then arm the workers at once and begin to agitate in the most decisive way amongst the peasants. Propose the seizure of the landlords' land and union for common struggle with the workers. Give a lot of attention to the peasants.'

"Ilyich was clearly excited and carried away. I was particularly surprised, I admitted, by his further plans.

" ' Further, it is essential to get the rest of the fleet in our hands. I am certain the majority of the ships will join the *Potemkin*. It is only necessary to act decisively and boldly. Then send a torpedo-boat for me at once. I am going to Russia. '

" ' You seriously think that is possible, Vladimir Ilyich ? ' I burst out involuntarily.

" ' Obviously I think it perfectly possible. It's only necessary to act decisively and quickly, ' he firmly and confidently replied. "

Was it all excitement ? Was Lenin simply carried away or was there some basis for that strange order, " send a torpedo-boat for me at once " ? No, events were to prove that every word of this conversation was founded on a complete understanding of the position in Odessa. Had the *Potemkin* landed a party, fraternised with the garrison, arrested the reactionary officers, bombarded if necessary their strongholds, had they won the town for the revolution and made a decisive summons to the rest of the fleet, all that Lenin's quick imagination visualised would have happened. But the mutinous sailors did none of these things, left the initiative with the enemy, and in the end lost all. A few months later the whole Black Sea Fleet mutinied at Sevastopol, and there is no doubt that the sailors would have broken out earlier had they felt some leadership in the *Potemkin*.

But the Social Democrats of Odessa failed to head the movement. Vassiliev arrived when all was over, and shootings, pogroms, and imprisonment ruled where for a moment it looked as though a mortal blow had been struck at the Empire. Lenin was carried away by the news of the mutiny, felt it so really that it seemed to him he was there, leading, organising, striking blow after decisive blow with all the instinct of a great general.

The *Potemkin* incident was typical of this tragic revolution. A people in revolt, the soldiers and sailors wavering, a

Government in panic, but no leaders, no clear aims, only boundless enthusiasm from those who found themselves, largely accidentally, at the head of the movement. And, in the end, the Government recovering, striking hard and mercilessly, the chance leaders of a day in gaol or fled in horror at the ruin they appeared to have caused, the people dispirited and broken.

The Social Democrats had not got over their split. In theory they were a united party, Bolshevik and Menshevik sitting together in one committee, but in practice they were poles apart. The Mensheviks had little faith in the ability of the workers to lead the revolution. The revolution itself was a bourgeois one, they considered—that is, against the Tsar and the landed nobility, for a democratic, capitalist Russia—and it must therefore be led by the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks also considered the revolution a bourgeois one, but knew full well that the Russian middle class was incapable of leading any revolution, that Tsardom could only be overthrown and the peasant question radically solved by a joint revolt of workers and peasants, under the leadership of the former.

Lenin's view was that such a revolt would set up a dictatorship of the workers and peasants, the aim of which would be the radical solution of the land problem by the confiscation of the landlords' estates. The Jacobin dictatorship of 1793, the Paris Commune of 1871, this was the kind of government he had in mind. The task of the workers and their party would be that of strengthening the position of their own class as a basis for an eventual struggle for making the Government a purely workers' dictatorship for the building up of a Socialist State.

The Bolsheviks were weak, their leaders mostly in exile and unable to return in the early, critical days ; nevertheless their party grew, attracted new forces, became known for the first time to thousands of workers. Yet it was not till the end of April that the real mobilisation of the party took place and Lenin was able to hold the congress he had striven so hard for in the black days of 1904.

It took place in London once again, and this time was completely Bolshevik in composition, the Mensheviks refusing to send delegates. The important questions discussed were those of armed revolt against Tsarism, participation in a Provisional Revolutionary Government, should such be formed, and the organisation of the party. The Mensheviks, led by Plekhanov, Martinov, and Trotsky, were against participation in a Provisional Government, claiming that the Workers' Party should form the Socialist opposition. Trotsky went even further, denying any bourgeois character to the revolution, claiming that its slogan must be "No Tsar, and a Labour Government."

Lenin was a greater realist. He understood that the Russian workers were not yet strong enough to take power in their own hands, that it was the peasant question which demanded the most urgent solution, but that unless the workers, as the most revolutionary class, took part in the Revolutionary Government, a counter-revolution was certain. They must join the Government in order to win the democratic freedom which would enable them to strengthen themselves for the struggle against capitalism. The Menshevik plan, Trotsky's slogan, in practice meant entrusting the whole leadership to the Russian capitalist class, despising the peasantry as a possible ally, overlooking entirely the frightful ferment in the deep Russian countryside, coming to a head now after centuries of repression.

Lenin carried the congress absolutely with him on these two points, but on the third question, that of organisation, he was defeated. The party, growing up in conditions of repression, was composed of small, secret committees, mostly of revolutionary intellectuals. Lenin demanded that their composition be changed so that they now became overwhelmingly working class in composition. This question seemed to him of the very greatest importance. Surely, if the workers were to lead the revolution, if the party were to draw its strength from them, they must lead it.

At the congress, a comrade mentioned that in Petersburg there was only one worker in the party committee. "A



disgrace!" Lenin cried out. He was haunted by this problem. Here in London, in quiet Geneva, he felt the revolution growing, deepening, new creative forces being flung up, felt it all as if he were there himself. He grew nervous, wrote letter after letter of guidance, pleading, instruction to the Russian committees. They were at their posts, he must do all he could till the great day when he should join them, whether it be triumphantly, on a destroyer flying the red flag, or, as was actually to happen, secretly, in disguise, with a false passport. Meanwhile, help and strength was to hand if they only knew how to make use of it. His letters are full of a consciousness of this immense creative force that must be organised, helped, and brought to the point, as well as of the most tender care for his own comrades.

He writes to Gusev, the leader of the Petersburg committee, at the beginning of April, emphasising that for a revolutionary it is essential to be able to judge the right moment to get out and move on to the next place before the police get hold of him. He is disturbed that Gusev is already being followed. "From my own experience, and that of a number of comrades, I know that the very hardest thing for a revolutionary is to leave a dangerous place *in time*."

It is just when a place gets hottest that it grows most interesting, Lenin admits, but "I count it my duty to *demand* in the most insistent manner that you quit Petersburg in time. . . . If not, it will do tremendous harm. The harm from going away will be apparent and negligible. Bring forward your young helpers *in time*, fill up the leading positions in a month or two, and be sure that . . . it will only be a great advantage. The young fellows will learn from the more responsible work, any mistakes they make we will soon put right. But a fiasco with the police will spoil our most important chances for getting our central work going."

Again, earlier in the year, we find him writing to Stasova and her comrades in the Moscow prison on what should be the behaviour of a revolutionary towards the

courts. All depends on whether or not it is possible to use the court for agitation, he writes. The agitation must be for *our* party, he insists, not generally Socialist. Then follows a typical, amusing passage about legal defence.

"Barristers must be handled with kid gloves and put under martial law. . . . Tell them first : if you, you son of a bitch, permit yourself the slightest indecency or political opportunism (talk about immaturity, the mistakenness of Socialism, about being carried away, *about Social-Democrats not believing in violence*, the peaceful character of their teaching and movement, etc., or anything like that), then I, the accused, will interrupt you on the spot, call you a scoundrel, declare I renounce such a defence, and so on. And carry these threats into effect. Take only clever barristers—the others are unnecessary."

Further instructions to the wretched man of law follow : "Confine yourself to the law, bring the witnesses and prosecution into contempt, but don't touch on the convictions of the accused, don't dare to hint even about your opinion of his conviction and actions. For you, my little Liberal, are so incapable of understanding these convictions, that even when you praise them you can't do it without some kind of idiocy. Of course, explain all this to the barrister not churlishly, but gently, concedingly, subtly, and carefully ! "

Whatever one's opinion of the man who wrote such letters, it is impossible not to feel that he held his convictions with the burning faith of a man and a leader, that above all he was a man whom his comrades could only love and respect.

And the time had come for this beloved leader to join his comrades, to see face to face the revolution about which he had dreamed, which had been the only object of his life since the day when the sacrifice of his brother revealed to him the real nature of the Tsar's Empire, the real forces at work in the depths of humanity.

## CHAPTER IV

1905

DISASTER followed upon disaster in the Far East, till at the beginning of August the shameful negotiations for peace began at Portsmouth, Mass., under the watchful eye of Theodore Roosevelt, guardian of American imperialism. In Russia the conflagration spread throughout the summer : strikes in Tiflis, Riga, Kovno, Warsaw, in all the outlying provinces of the Empire ; demonstrations and shootings in every great city ; Jewish pogroms, the workers arming themselves against the pogromists ; and lastly, as the hot days of the harvest approached, most terrible of all the beginnings of a jacquerie in the countryside.

Strikes of agricultural labourers had been common throughout the year, but now the peasant, the Russian muzhik whom the more imbecile and reactionary intellectuals had always delighted to picture as a holy idiot, joined in. The church bell ringing at night echoed with its dismal metallic boom over the dark, parched fields, resting uneasily from the agony of the harvest. The bands of excited peasants gathered together, a few armed ex-soldiers, survivors of the Manchurian slaughter, in front, and marched to the squire's manor house. They destroyed the machinery, emptied his barns, divided his cattle, sent his servants away, and systematically, with an almost loving care, burned the manor and the farm to the ground.

The red cock was out ! Night after night the dark line of the wide and yearning Russian horizon was broken by the leaping flames, the heavy rest of the countryside disturbed by the hollow clanging of the rallying-bell. Sometimes the squire was beaten ; very rarely he was killed ; more often he

was simply sent packing, the peasants being convinced that if his manor was destroyed he could not come back.

Only in Courland, on the Baltic, and among the mountains of the Caucasus did this peasant movement become an armed struggle, but there the hatred of the German junkers and the Georgian princes, bound up with national hatred for the Russian oppressor, grew into a people's revolt. But to the terrified Tsar and his councillors there was no difference. If to the intellectuals and the workmen were to be added the peasants, then indeed they were alone against a whole people. The order went out to crush ruthlessly the peasant movement. Hardly anywhere, except in the two provinces named, was any resistance offered, but punitive expeditions of horse, foot, and guns moved through the country, and, much as bombing aeroplanes to-day deal with recalcitrant peasants in India or Iraq, so did the Tsar's generals deal with their insurgent tenants. A couple of dozen rounds from a field battery into a village soon brought the people to their senses. Awed by the burning huts, by the power it was not possible to strike back at, the "guilty" were given up for punishment.

But the growing revolt of the people was forcing the freedom the Tsar would not grant of his own free will. The universities were made self-governing; very well, the students at once turned them into permanent meeting-places where all parties could demonstrate free from police supervision. Socialist magazines, Socialist daily papers, including a Bolshevik daily *New Life*, began to defy the censor, and no one dared intervene. The revolutionary parties were already working in semi-legal conditions. Nothing could now keep Lenin back.

At the beginning of November he left Geneva for Stockholm, where he stayed two weeks, waiting for the comrade who would bring him the necessary false papers, anxiously gazing at the narrow and stormy strip of water that divided him from the revolution. On November 18th he reached Helsingfors, where he was hidden by a lecturer at the university, Hunar Kastren, and two days later, guided by

Kastren's young son, a student at the university, he reached Petersburg.

He arrived at the very height of the movement, when the decisive moment in the struggle between autocracy and people was clearly at hand. In Petersburg, Moscow, and other great cities a general strike had broken out in October; bakers, lawyers, students, apothecaries, railwaymen, trammens, factory workers, every conceivable trade and profession took part. The direction of the strike was in the hands of Councils of Workers' Deputies, the "Councils of Action" so well known to the English Labour movement, twelve years later to become world famous as "Soviets." On October 17th the Tsar had issued a manifesto promising a "constitution," in the hope of dividing his enemies. That day he closed the entry in his diary with these words: "At five o'clock I signed the manifesto. After such a day my head grew heavy and my thoughts confused. Lord, come to our aid! Put down Russia!"

Nicholas had little faith in his manifesto, which indeed was a mere manœuvre, promising nothing and meaning nothing, a manœuvre till the soldiers should be back from Manchuria, to avenge their defeat with divine aid on the mutinous Russian people. The strike went on; the reaction answered with pogroms and murders, the shooting down of demonstrators; the moment for armed uprising was clearly approaching.

One of the Bolshevik leaders, Ernest Bauman, a veterinary surgeon, was just released from prison in Moscow under the amnesty accompanying the manifesto, and shot down by a group of officers as he was walking to his home. A hundred thousand people attended his funeral; the police dared not even show themselves on the streets, and at the graveside his widow openly called for an armed uprising of the people. "What are all these promised freedoms," Lenin commented bitterly on the murder, "when armed force remains in the hands of the Government?"

But it seemed as though even the armed forces were



deserting the Tsar. Revolts broke out among the seamen in Kronstadt and Sevastopol, only suppressed because of the lack of energy of their leaders and the general weakness of political leadership which characterised all this first, tragic Russian revolution.

Such was Russia in November 1905, when Lenin returned from his first exile. From his hiding-place he quickly got in touch with his party and its Press, vigorously assumed the leadership. Kronstadt had been cleverly broken by a few concessions. There remained Sevastopol. "The time has gone for ever," Lenin wrote, "when the Russian army, as in 1849, went over the Russian frontiers in order to suppress revolution." The garrisons of Petersburg and Moscow were in a ferment; from the Far East came news of a movement among the returning soldiers, who all along the dreary Siberian railway were fraternising with the workers.

The Kaiser was hastily mobilising naval squadrons and army divisions for intervention on behalf of "Cousin Nicky." In Austria a general strike for universal suffrage had broken out; the powers and thrones were uneasy in their places. "You are not alone, workers and peasants of all Russia!" Lenin closed his last article from Switzerland. "And if you succeed in throwing down, defeating, and destroying the tyrants of feudal, police, landlord, and Tsarist Russia, then your victory will be a signal for a world struggle against the tyrants of capital, a struggle for full, not mere political, but for economic freedom of the toilers, a struggle for the ridding of humanity of poverty and for the realising of Socialism." If the Tsar had his reserves in the Kaiser Wilhelm's battalions, Lenin had his in even mightier battalions.

A few days after he returned he made his first public appearance, disguised by shaving off his beard, and under another name, at the meeting of the Petersburg Soviet on November 27th. The workers had demanded an eight-hour day, the employers had answered by a lock-out, and the Tsar won his first victory in the counter-attack. The industrial bourgeoisie deserted the revolution, rallied to the

manifesto of October 17th, and took the offensive against their workers. In the name of the Bolsheviki, Lenin proposed that the Petersburg Soviet answer this measure by a call for an all-Russian general strike, the prelude to revolt.

Lenin's proposal was adopted, but it was never carried out. The movement had passed its height. The Soviet itself, under the leadership of a lawyer called Khrustalov-Nosser, and later of Trotsky, called loudly for revolt and did little to prepare for it. The majority of its members supported the Mensheviki, and they were inclined to look upon themselves as a demonstrative alternative government rather than as the means for preparing a real struggle for power. The leadership of the Petersburg Bolsheviki, till Lenin's arrival, was weak, and they were content to let things drift.

The party as a whole was preparing for a rising. It had its secret military committee, at whose head was Krassin, and Lenin was in the closest contact with them, working out to the last technical detail, with his usual thoroughness, all the plans for a rising. For example, he wrote to the Fighting Committee of the St. Petersburg organisation, "Here you need frantic energy, and still more energy. With horror—yes, by God, with horror—I see you have been talking of grenades for more than six months and haven't yet made one ! And it's very learned people talking. . . . Go to the youth, gentlemen ! That's your sole, all-saving means. Otherwise, by God, you'll be late (I can see that all right), and will be left with learned notes, plans, sketches, schemes, excellent recipes, but no organisation, nothing live. Go to the youth. Found at once fighting squads, everywhere, both of students and especially of workers, and so on, and so on. Organise immediately squads of from three to ten, to thirty persons."

A note has survived in which he works out to the very last detail the tasks of the squads, the nucleus of the revolutionary army. Squads should be of any number from two upwards, but above all be self-sufficing, expecting help from nowhere and arming themselves. Nor did he propose

they should arm themselves with machine guns and armoured cars. To the peaceful intellectual the weapons he suggests must seem remarkable enough, though the military or police officer will see their significance at once : " Rifles, revolvers, bombs, knives, sticks, rags soaked in kerosene for fires, rope or rope ladders, spades for making barricades, clubs, flares, and barbed wire, nails for use against cavalry, etc., etc."

Squads must be formed of people living together, or meeting frequently at regular times, so that they are not separated at critical moments, with proper signs, recognition signals at night, and so on. " You mustn't forget that it's ninety-nine per cent certain events will take you by surprise and that you will only be able to get together in terribly difficult circumstances."

Even without arms, squads can do a great deal ; regulating crowds, attacking and disarming policemen or stray Cossacks, rescuing prisoners or wounded when the police are weak, gathering on roofs or house-tops and pelting troops and police with stones, pouring boiling water on them, etc. Training of squads has a double character, theoretical and practical, and practical training can best be gained by scouting, securing plans of Government buildings, barracks, police stations and prisons, by actual fighting against the Black Hundred bands, or, as we should say to-day, the Fascist " storm-troops."

All kinds of people—old men, women, youths, weaklings—are capable of taking part in some way or other, he emphasises. There is work for everyone who wants to help. Finally, he drives home his greatest point : no delay, no indecision, or the revolt is lost. " The greatest decisiveness, the greatest energy, the immediate use of every suitable moment, the immediate kindling of the revolutionary passion of the crowd, the directing of it to the more decisive and most decisive actions—such is the first duty of a revolutionary."

But the moment for a successful rising had passed. It should have come while the great general strike was still

on, when the mutinies at Kronstadt and Sevastopol were paralysing the Government. Unfortunately, there was no one political party capable of taking the lead at this time. The two parties who really believed in insurrection, apart from talking of it, were the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks. The former had little hold among the workers, their members being chiefly drawn from the students and intelligentsia, and they had no belief in mass organisation. Their tactics were frankly terrorist, but they had a very big influence inside the army and navy. The Bolsheviks as a party were still in their infancy—only a handful of unknown people in January, and even in December with a decisive influence only in a few towns.

But the Government had not surrendered. It struck hard when it saw that nothing followed the naval mutinies or the great strikes. The Petersburg Soviet was arrested in December, and the initiative passed from the revolution. Not, however, before one last blow, the most desperate of all, had been struck. In Moscow the Bolsheviks were the leading party, and on December 19th the Moscow Soviet declared a general strike, so complete that the whole town, with the exception of a small circle in the centre, was in the hands of the workers. In three days the strike had grown to an armed struggle under Bolshevik leadership against the garrison. The forces of the insurgents never surpassed 2,000, fighting in "shifts" with the most antiquated weapons, but they had the support of the whole working population and suffered surprisingly small casualties.

The Moscow rising was suppressed with the help of troops from other towns, and the general strike did not spread. The workers were everywhere exhausted from the long struggles of the year, during which many of them had struck as often as three or four times.

The Moscow rising marked the highest point of the revolution. Peasant disturbances, strikes, terrorist acts, and guerilla warfare in the mountains of the Caucasus, continued for nearly two years longer. But the Government felt itself unshakable. The famous French loan was made

immediately after the suppression of the Moscow rising, and there began that bloodstained reaction which was to shake the whole world, which a Russian cynic named "the great transmigration of the Russian people into prison."

Lenin had arrived too late. But it was typical of him that he had come, while Plekhanov had remained in Switzerland. Plekhanov's comment on the December rising was, "It would have been better never to have taken up arms." Lenin's was: "But for the Moscow rising in December, no one would ever have spoken of a 'revolution' in Russia in 1905."

At the very moment the Moscow rising was taking place, the Bolshevik leaders met in a secret conference at Tammerfors, in Finland, to discuss the preparation of insurrection. Here for the first time Lenin met the youth of the party, and the legendary leader became a reality for all those of his followers who had hitherto only known him by name. Among those who came to Tammerfors was Stalin. Stalin has given his impressions of Lenin at this meeting, impressions which throw almost as much light on the enthusiastic young revolutionary from the Caucasus as on Lenin himself.

"I first met Lenin at the Bolshevik conference at Tammerfors. I had hoped to see the mountain eagle of our party a great man, not great only politically, but, if you like, physically also, for Comrade Lenin was drawn in my imagination in the shape of a giant, imposing and typical. What was my disillusionment when I saw the most ordinary sort of man, smaller than the average, literally in no way different from ordinary mortals. It is accepted that a 'great' man is usually late to meetings, so that the audience may wait his appearance with beating hearts, and then just before he appears those present warn you, 'Sh! . . . Quiet . . . he's coming.' . . . What was my disappointment when I learned that Lenin had come to the meeting before the delegates, and, hidden somewhere in a corner, was simply chatting in the most ordinary way with some ordinary delegates to the conference."



Stalin recalls that two of Lenin's speeches here, on the current position and on the agrarian question, inspired the whole meeting by their unusual force of conviction, simplicity and clarity of argument, short and comprehensible sentences, rather than by any gestures or fine phrases. "But I was not then taken so much by that side of Lenin's speeches," Stalin continues. "I was carried away by their indefinable power of logic, which, at first a little drily, but for all that deeply, gripped the audience, gradually electrified it, and then took it hopelessly prisoner."

Armed risings took place in many other towns besides Moscow, but they were equally failures. Nevertheless, Lenin remained on, in hiding, in constant danger of arrest and perhaps of execution, for nearly two years more. He divided his time between Petersburg and the Finnish villages, with occasional visits to Moscow. Finland was then, as a result of the armed struggle of almost the whole people, but particularly the working men, the only place in the Tsarist empire where the political police had little power, where it was possible to meet and discuss almost openly.

Lenin did not lose hope after the Moscow defeat. He felt that in the spring the workers would have gathered strength again, and that there would be renewed peasant disorders, since the new Duma had given nothing and the land question was as far as ever from any other solution than that given it by the Tsar's artillery. So the secret committee-rooms of the Bolsheviks scattered up and down Petersburg became used to surprise visits from a little neatly dressed man, an umbrella tucked under his arm, who might have been a bank clerk or a minor civil servant, but never a dangerous revolutionary. They soon guessed who the little man was, despite the false name on his credentials, by the thoroughness with which he cross-examined them as to their knowledge of the district they worked in, by the care with which he verified every little detail of their apparatus for conspiracy, the false passports, the passwords, the all-clear and danger signs, the supplies of money and arms, the connections with other party organisations.

Then he would take an inconspicuous seat in some suburban train for a Finnish station as the pursuit became for a time too hot for him. Every day a courier would visit him at the wooden villa in the forest, near the sea, where he was hiding, bringing newspapers, reports ; and, while the courier waited, Lenin would read the papers, sit down at his desk, and write his daily article for the Bolshevik paper which still led an uneasy existence in the capital.

He wrote very fast, without hesitation, filling two columns in an hour, never once lifting his eyes from the note-book which he always preferred to sheets of paper. " It appeared to me," says one of these couriers, " that before me was going on, not a creative process, but the simple copying out of something already drawn up earlier by Ilyich."

Among those who came to see him in Finland were the Bolshevik military leaders, some of them workers and intellectuals, others officers and soldiers from the army. One of these, Emilian Yaroslavsky, was, like all other practical workers who came in touch with him, immensely impressed by Lenin's understanding of his work, by his eager, all-embracing questions, his desire to know, not just the general outlines, but the smallest details. Lenin could not ask too much about the way in which the secret military schools were carried on, in which the fighting squads were taught to handle and prepare explosives, to use machine guns and other weapons, to dig mines, and the tactics of street fighting. Lenin was always more interested in the living detail on which the summary is based. In this way he not only himself was in constant, living contact with reality, but he won the confidence of everyone who talked to him because of his intense interest in what they had to say.

It might be a worker from the Putilov metal-works who brought him his papers and messages to the woodland refuge. " Well, how are the Putilov lads ? What is the mood in Peter<sup>1</sup> ? What are they writing in the papers ? What are you up to there ? " Then, as the worker slowly, patiently

<sup>1</sup> The former capital has always been referred to familiarly by Russians as " Peter."

answers each question, the eager mind bursts out again, thirsting for the smallest living detail from that swarming, working-class life. "Who's been sacked from your place? What's the situation in the shops?" And all the time joking, telling stories himself, bubbling over with happiness at being in direct contact once again with the workers who meant so much to him.

The rising tide of the working-class movement was making it difficult for the division in the party to continue. The Bolsheviks were winning greater authority among the workers; the workers themselves were demanding unity. In April 1906 the two fractions met in congress at Stockholm to work out a basis for this unity. The Mensheviks this time were in the majority and Lenin was defeated. "I first saw Lenin then," recalls Stalin, "in the rôle of a defeated man. He was not one jot like those leaders who whimper and whine after a defeat. On the contrary, the defeat turned Lenin into a whirlwind of energy, inspiring his followers to new battles, to the future victory. But what kind of a defeat was that? You had only to look at Lenin's adversaries, the victors at the Stockholm Congress—Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov, and others. They did not look much like real victors, for Comrade Lenin in his merciless criticism of Menshevism didn't leave an inch unflayed." To those who came to him depressed Lenin would answer through compressed lips, "Don't whimper, comrades; we shall certainly win, for we're right."

For a moment in the summer of 1906 it looked as though he were to be proved right quicker than anyone expected. Once again the unrest among the peasantry found its echo among the armed forces, and mutinies occurred in the army and navy. The most important outbreak was at Sveaborg and Kronstadt, the two fortresses covering Petersburg, where the sailors were affected now by Bolshevik as well as Socialist Revolutionary agitation. Lenin at once arranged a meeting with some of the sailors, and struggled hard but vainly for a general strike of the Petersburg workers in support of the mutineers.

But it was not to be yet. The Tsar was firm in his place, though he wrote complainingly to his Ministers of the "disgrace" of being forced to hide on board his yacht or in some country villa, of being forbidden to enter his own capital. Slowly the iron hand was feeling its way once more to the people's throat. A grim wag in the Duma, referring to the repressive policy of the new Minister, Stolypin, spoke of "Stolypin's necktie." No less than 3,500 Russians, by sentence of field court-martial, died in "Stolypin's necktie." The outbursts of 1906 and 1907, serious though they were, were rather the last bitter convulsions of people who did not care much whether they lived or died than the threatening and terrible rise of a new tide of revolt. Did this mean that all the agony and sacrifice went for nothing?

No, Lenin could never accept that view. Romantic revolutionaries like Boris Savinkov, the executioner of Von Plehve, might drift into pessimism, under the pseudonym of Ropshin write bitter and beautiful mystical complaints, or like Leonid Andreyev give up all hope of overthrowing the monster autocracy. Lenin considered that Stolypin's "reforms" showed that the revolution had forced at least partial concessions, an opening of the doors to capitalist development in the semi-Asiatic empire. And it is certainly true that from 1907 to 1914, following Stolypin's effort to smash the mediæval village commune, a substantial class of rich peasants began to grow up, industry went ahead with increased vigour after the crisis earlier in the century. But the mass of peasantry sank into deeper poverty; industrially Russia still remained one of the most backward countries in the world; the condition of the workers altered very little for the better; and, most important of all, despite the existence of the vote and the Duma, power remained in the hands of the reactionary clique behind Nicholas II.





*Part III*  
**ON THE EVE**

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**CHAPTER I**  
**YEARS OF REACTION**

**J**UST TWO years before, not in a destroyer under the red flag, but secretly, with false papers, Lenin had crossed the frontier between Finland and Russia proper. Now, at the end of November 1907, it was clear that the revolution had failed. The detectives of the political police had invaded Finland, now, under Stolypin's harsh régime, no longer the last refuge of Russian democracy, and it was becoming more and more difficult to avoid arrest. The Central Committee took a decision that Lenin must emigrate once more, and entrusted him, together with two others, with the task of founding in Switzerland yet another Bolshevik illegal journal.

He moved to a village outside Helsingfors, waiting for an opportunity to slip on the steamer to Stockholm. But the watch was too close. There was nothing for it but to make a dash through the night over the ice to a small island where the steamers called with mail. The winter was mild, the ice not yet firm, but at last two rather tipsy Finnish fishermen consented to guide him over. Krupskaya tells that as they stumbled through the dark the ice began to move beneath their feet: "Oh, what a silly way to have to die . . ." Ilyich thought, and at the same time exerted his whole strength, his whole will to the effort of scrambling on to firm ground.

They got out. As they made that grey and eerie journey

over the frozen sea, away from that land of terror and defeat, his thoughts could hardly have been other than the gloomiest. To trudge away, slipping, stumbling, with two drunken fishermen, almost to perish in that frozen desert of sea ; to go back again, after those two years of struggle, to cold exile—it was a sorry end to the dreams of two years ago. Yet the tenacious will to fight and live on was still there. Only thirteen more years were to pass, and over that very same treacherous ice the ghostly lines of Red soldiers were to advance to storm Kronstadt, the last fortress of counter-revolution in the former Empire of the Tsar, and Nicholas himself would be rotting like a dog at the bottom of a well in Ekaterinburg.

Afterwards, in Geneva, his friend and fellow townsman, V. Adoratsky, asked him what was his best memory of the years 1905 to 1907. "The meeting at the Panina mansion," he answered. The democratic Countess Panina had given her house up for public meetings, and here for the first and only time Ilyich spoke openly to the workers who crowded the hall. The police had not dared to come in to the meeting, but he was introduced as "Karpov"—the name he was using then. He was excited, terribly pale, as he faced at last the force that was making the revolution, from whom he drew all his own strength. The Bolsheviki in the audience recognised him and applauded, he drew himself together and began. The previous speaker had been a Cadet, the new-born Russian Liberals, and, to the obvious satisfaction of his audience, he attacked this half-hearted party which wanted to make the best of both worlds, placate autocracy, and agitate for "freedom." He passed to the Duma, which was only an incident in the struggle between Tsar and people. "When the Government stands against the people we must remember that only the warring sides can solve the conflict." Perhaps it was the recollection of that eager crowd of workers, with whom the police dared not interfere, that kept his faith in the future unshaken in the hard years to come.

In January 1908 they were back again in Geneva, and, as

they walked once more to their wretched exiles' lodging, Lenin muttered : " I feel just as if I had come here to be buried." To his sister he wrote : " For some days now we have been in this accursed Geneva. A foul hole, but there is nothing to be done about it."

Indeed, few leaders have ever needed such fortitude as was to be demanded of Lenin from now on. The best forces of the party were in gaol or in hiding, while some, like Bauman and his old friend the Petersburg worker Ivan Babushkin, had fallen victims to the Black Hundreds or the executioner. The breach between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, despite the " unity " agreed upon at Stockholm, was wider than ever, while even among the Bolsheviks themselves bitter disputes were growing from day to day. One section wished to boycott the elections to the Duma altogether, as had been done with the First Duma when the workers were disfranchised. Against this childish tactic Lenin fought bitterly and, it seemed, successfully.

No sooner, however, was this question settled than disagreement broke out afresh. The same people now proposed that the Bolshevik deputies should be recalled from the Duma as a protest against its reactionary character, while the opposition also began to put forward philosophical views which were directly opposed to Marxist materialism. " All the intelligentsia, philistine elements, are throwing up the party ; the ebbing away of the intelligentsia is immense. Only the real proletarians remain, and it is impossible to collect funds openly," Lenin wrote to F. A. Rothstein in London. Not only was the party torn by dissension—it had no money. Some months earlier a congress had been held in London, and here the help of George Lansbury and Maxim Gorky was called in to save them from disaster. A Jewish manufacturer, Mr. Joseph Felz, was found, who was willing to make a substantial loan that was to have been repaid on January 1st, 1908. There was no hope of repaying when the day came, and Lenin had to beg Rothstein to explain the sorry position to Mr. Felz. Every participant in the congress, Menshevik and Bolshevik, had signed the I O U, which

was finally recovered in 1923, when the Bolshevik Party, now victorious, paid its debt in full.

Lenin's position was not an enviable one. One of his own comrades, in the bitterness of the dispute, accused him of acting so that he stood absolutely alone, emptiness all about him. Lenin answered him proudly: "Well, there are such occasions when the masses, for some reason or other, desert the battlefield, and then that leader or that general is a bad one, who, when he is left alone, can't defend his colours. There are occasions when one has to stand alone to preserve the purity of one's flag."

All through this period his letters emphasise the growing bitterness of the factional struggle, the difficulties of rallying an army in defeat. The Mensheviks, defeated at the London Congress of the party in the summer of 1907, were now proposing the liquidation of the party as a revolutionary organisation, and its merging into a broad "Labour Conference" with a legal existence. Against this idea, as well as against his own ultra "left" followers who wanted to abandon all legal forms of struggle, especially parliamentary struggle in the Duma, Lenin fought passionately. He considered the recalcitrant Bolsheviks little better than the Mensheviks, and declared roundly that their high-sounding revolutionary phrases merely covered up a desire to abandon the fight. The fact that in a very short time most of them were in the Menshevik camp seems to show that his judgment was correct.

There had been differences among the emigrants before 1905, but in the atmosphere of desertion and defeat, to which was soon added that of treachery, for the movement became riddled with spies, the life became at times almost unbearable. "Emigrant life is a hundred times heavier than before the revolution," he complains in a letter to Gorky. "You can't separate emigrant life from scandal. To sit in the thick of that scandal and 'scum' is nauseating; even to observe it is nauseating."

But, though the physical and nervous strain was sometimes unbearable, he would not give way, nor allow others

to give away. He scolds Gorky for his pessimism. . . . " I see, dear Alexei Maximovich, that life is very sad for you now. You have been forced to see the working-class movement from such an aspect, in such conditions, that have many a time brought intellectuals of little faith to despair in the working-class movement. . . .

" It is impermissible for you to give way to such moods, which are brought about by episodes in life abroad. Conditions do occur when the life of the workers' movement inevitably gives birth to this emigrant fighting and splits, to squabbling, to the struggles of different little circles—but that is not because there is anything internally wrong in Social Democracy itself, but because those elements from which the working class has to forge its party are of such different calibres.

" It will forge in any case ; it will forge a superb revolutionary Social Democracy in Russia, and it will forge it quicker than it sometimes appears from the point of view of this damned emigrant's condition."

In the autumn he moved with Krupskaya to Paris, and here began what was to prove from every point of view the worst period of the emigration. Their flat in the Rue Marie-Rose was barely furnished at all : " two deal tables ; some stools ; an arm-chair, as old as Adam, they had brought from Geneva ; an aged divan with holes in it ; and two plain iron beds," is how one visitor describes their furniture. Krupskaya, with a note of irony, mentions that when they let the flat to a Cracow merchant he fussed around, asking the cost of living in Paris, how much was butter, how much was meat, how much was a goose. " If he had asked us the price of horseflesh or salad, I might have been able to tell him," she comments grimly.

Yet they lived well in comparison with other emigrants. One went mad with hunger and flung himself in the Seine. Another died from the hardship he had undergone. Then there was the terrible case of Kamo, the Caucasian leader of the Bolshevik fighting squads, hero of a hundred adventures, hairbreadth escapes and plots, with more than one



death sentence awaiting him, who was betrayed by a spy in Berlin and handed over to the Tsarist gendarmes by the German police. For over two years Kamo successfully feigned madness, undergoing the most horrible tortures in German and Russian prison hospitals, until at last he escaped and came to Lenin in Paris.

In Russia, one after another the leading party workers were betrayed to prison and exile, and for every one it was necessary to find a substitute from among the emigrants, arrange his secret journey, supply him with funds, to wait in agony for news that he too had been betrayed, perhaps, or hunted down by the all-pervading political police. There was the fight to carry on against the enemy inside the party ; the papers and journals to conduct ; the books to write ; and even, as happened in 1908 and 1909, an entirely new branch of study to become a master in, and that the most difficult of all—philosophy. To achieve his aim Ilyich made yet another journey to London, to study in the British Museum all the writings of the modern philosophers, German Machists, French Bergsenites, American Pragmatists.

His enemies gave back blow for blow, and they were many. Trotsky showed signs of leaving the Mensheviks. Ilyich at once wrote to him asking him to collaborate in the Bolshevik Press. "I signed *in the name of the whole* editorial board of the *Proletarian*, since I wished the affair to stand on more friendly, collective ground (personally I have a long-standing fight with Trotsky and the quarrel was one from 1903–5 when he was a Menshevik). Trotsky must have taken offence at this mode of address, or I don't know what. Anyhow, he replied in a letter, not written by himself but 'By direction of Comrade Trotsky,' informing the editorial board that he was too busy to collaborate. That's posing, in my opinion. And he behaved like a *poseur* at the London Congress."

Others attacked him also, enraged at his unshaken front. "One man against everyone else, it's like nothing on earth." "He's ruining the party." "What luck it would be

for the party if he disappeared somewhere, vanished, died," were some of the comments heard.

One of his oldest and staunchest friends, Krzhizhanovsky, took up the cudgels with the Menshevik Dan, who made some such remark.

"How can one man ruin the whole party, and they be all so powerless against that one that they must call in death for an accomplice?" he asked Dan indignantly.

"Because there isn't another such man who for the whole twenty-four hours of every day is busy with the revolution, who has no other thoughts but thoughts of the revolution, and who even in his dreams sees only the revolution. See what you can do with a man like that."

Dan was half joking when he called for death to help him in his struggle against Lenin, but the time was to come, in 1918, when his Socialist adversaries called in death as their accomplice in grim earnest.

Sometimes the strain would bring Ilyich almost to breaking-point. He grew pale and ill, was tortured by headaches, while his wife worked along with him with hardly less energy. His mother-in-law, who lived with them still, would watch almost in despair, and confide to friends that "he'll kill both Nadyusha and himself with that life." Sometimes he would come in so completely exhausted that he would fling himself fully dressed on the iron bedstead, and lie motionless for hours.

When such periods came that it seemed the breaking-point was near, there was always the one way out, the old beloved way, long bicycle rides and walks in the Forest of Fontainebleau, or a brief holiday at the sea, in some deserted place, where he could let nature slowly reassert itself, feel the energy come slowly back to his body and mind. Sometimes also, far too rarely, came something that rejoiced him more than the wind from the sea, than the scent of the forest trees—a letter from some comrade in Russia.

"Dear friend," he writes to Sverdlov, afterwards to be first President of the Soviet Republic, "I got your letter

... and was extremely happy to get news from you. It is a pity I didn't hear sooner. The years are hellish and so the chance to keep connections with old friends is ten times more precious. . . ."

"Paris is a nasty hole in many ways," he wrote to his sister, and he had little cause to remember kindly the capital of Europe. Poverty, emigrant scandals, grinding work, the oppression of the defeat of the movement in Russia, all these things made it anything but a place of gaiety, even had Ilyich possessed any kind of tolerance for the tourist philistinism which passes for gaiety in Paris. But his nature was a happy one that would not give way for long to depression, and he was able to enjoy himself in Paris too, after his own fashion.

"Here we are a whole year in Paris already," he writes to his mother at the end of 1909. "We've settled in a little, though it's a pity we see so little of the real life here. Not long ago we went to a little near-by theatre and came away very pleased. It was a real working-class audience, the women suckling their babies, hatless, excited, lively. It was interesting to see the instant reaction of the audience to the play. They didn't applaud good or bad acting, but good or bad actions. And the play was the same—naïve with different 'good words' suited to the public's taste. You got the impression of something very direct and lively. I was sorry Manyasha (his sister) wasn't with us." The play was about the disciplinary battalions in Morocco, and was not allowed to be performed except in the suburbs. Another favourite was a cabaret singer who was the son of a Communard. His direct, democratic satire pleased Ilyich enormously.

But these excursions, like the bicycle rides or the rare months by the sea, were brief interludes in the unremitting round of work. His book on philosophy, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, was completed in the autumn of 1908; his articles on inner-party questions were continued throughout 1909—there was the work of the International Socialist Bureau, on which he was one of the Russian

representatives, to be attended to, an international conference of Socialist journalists in Brussels to be attended, but, above all, the changes that were taking place in Russia had to be closely followed.

Lenin's whole outlook on life, his philosophy of history, indignantly rejected the common Liberal teaching that all violent movements defeated their end, bringing the wheel of reaction full circle. To those who would pretend that the great European revolutionary movement of 1848, which was the practical school in which Marxist teaching grew to its full stature, was a failure, he retorted that they neither would nor could understand the motive powers of history. History faces humanity with certain tasks, but it also gives more than one way of solving them.

The problem of 1848 was the problem of capitalist development for the chief countries of Europe, and there were two ways to that end : the way of destroying feudalism from below, by plebeian revolt, or the way of imposing capitalism from above, by a Junker or a Bonapartist dictatorship, the method of the barricades or the blood and iron of Bismarck and Napoleon. The latter path in the end proved to be the one taken, but it opened the way to another, more terrible problem, the problem of capitalist rule itself, of the opposition between bourgeois and proletarian. Nevertheless, only the intellectual dilettante could pretend that 1848 was in vain, that it did not bring any progress in the heavy march of humanity.

And so with Russia in 1905. The intellectuals were in agonies of doubt, were plunging into mysticism, were covering their desertion of the struggle by religious fantasies around the theme of renunciation. But history, which moves not through the vain minds of a few "chosen" intellectuals, but through the heavy medium of human masses, was marching ruthlessly on. In Russia too, the problem which 1905 had attempted to solve was that of free capitalist development. Only in Russia, that semi-Asiatic land with its dark millions of peasant cultivators, that problem was essentially an agrarian one.

Here also, history had placed two possibilities before the Russian people. Capitalism could develop in Russia either by the "Prussian way" or the "American way." Lenin's historical genius thus briefly formulated the problem. Either by the way of Bismarck and the Prussian squires, by expropriating the peasant and turning him into a labourer on a capitalist estate, with a despotic but nevertheless bourgeois monarchy as a superstructure, or the democratic way of the American Republic, which in two revolutions, those of 1777 and 1861, fought for the land for the people and for free capitalist farms.

In a letter to Skvortsov-Stepanov, written in December 1908, he puts the problem with revealing clarity. "*This agrarian question is in Russia to-day a national question of bourgeois development. . . . We must clearly see that the national problem, which has been fully confirmed, of the bourgeois development of Germany was unity, etc., but not the agrarian problem, while the national problem of the final confirmation of bourgeois development in Russia is just this agrarian (even peasant) problem.*"

Stolypin's land policy, forced forward by the revolution of 1905, is living proof of this contention. "The bourgeois development of Russia in 1905 had already fully ripened to demand the breaking down of the existing superstructure—a worn-out, mediæval land-owning system. . . . We are living in a period of *this* breaking down which different classes of *bourgeois* Russia are *endeavouring*, each in their own way, to accomplish and complete. The peasants and workers by nationalisation . . . the landlords and the old Girondist bourgeoisie by the law of November 11th, 1906" (Stolypin's effort to break up the peasant commune).

In Russia, unlike Germany, Lenin concludes, neither of these two ways, the Prussian or the American, has yet proved victorious and the fight goes on. "With us during every crisis in *our* epoch (1905—1909—19??), the general democratic muzhiks' movement will occur, and to ignore it would be a fundamental mistake."

Few students of Russian history to-day would care to



deny that this letter is a dazzlingly clear analysis of the forces at work inside the Russian State. That question mark which Lenin posed with regard to the date of the next crisis was bound to receive its answer, sooner or later. It proved to be 1917, it was almost 1914, and in fact any great crisis was certain to have had the same effect. Knowing this, understanding so clearly the forces at work, and not because of miraculous second sight but through intense study of the economic development of his country, above all of its agrarian problem, about which he knew more than any man living, Lenin had to forge his own strategy for the inevitable shock of classes.

All the experience of 1848 proved that the only guarantee of the success of the democratic, plebeian method, is a strong and revolutionary working class. But the leadership of the working class immediately poses another problem, its relation to capitalism in the event of victory over the old, mediæval superstructure. To this there could be only one answer, the workers fight for capitalist democracy only because it gives them greater freedom in the organisation and preparation of the struggle for Socialism. The coming revolution in Russia must inevitably turn into a Socialist revolution, how quickly depended upon the degree of bourgeois development already existing and the conditions in which the revolution took place.

Lenin knew from life itself, from his own experience in the Volga steppes, as well as from Blue Books and Government reports, that no workers' revolution could succeed in Russia if it did not also solve this peasant problem. Often observers have noticed his own physical resemblance to the Russian peasant of those central plains which stretch to the marches of Asia. Rosa Luxemburg pointed him out to Clara Zetkin at the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International in 1907. "Take a good look at him. That is Lenin. Look at the self-willed stubborn head. A real Russian peasant's head with a few faintly Asiatic lines."

But it would be an absurd mistake to take Lenin as the embodiment of the muzhik, or even of a muzhik's revolution.

His genius lay in the fact that he so clearly saw the peculiar path which a workers' revolution must take in Russia, that it must first solve this immense peasant problem before going on to the realisation of its own, Socialist aims. First and foremost Lenin was a revolutionary Socialist, a leader of the working class, drawing all his faith and inspiration from that class, whose historical rôle he considered to be no less than the remaking of mankind in a classless society.

Gorky tells of a conversation he overheard in Hyde Park among a group of Russian workers, delegates to the congress of 1907, concerning the leaders of the two fractions in the party, Lenin and Plekhanov.

"For all I know," said one, "there may be others as clever as Lenin on the side of the workers in Europe. But I can't believe you'll find another whom I could fall in love with at once, like I have done with him."

Another added with a smile, "That chap's one of us."

"But Plekhanov's also one of us," someone objected.

I heard an answer that exactly hit the mark: "Plekhanov—he's our teacher, our master; but Lenin—he's our leader and comrade."

A young fellow said jokingly: "Plekhanov's old frock-coat is too tight for him."

Lenin and Gorky first met at this London Congress, and soon after, in the spring of 1908, Lenin visited the writer—for whom he had developed a strong affection—at his home on the island of Capri. It was at the time of the disputes over philosophy, and most of Lenin's opponents were gathered together in Capri, where they were to open a workers' school. There were the intellectual "lights" of the party, Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Bazarov—lights which dazzled the impressionable eyes of the artist Gorky. He could not understand how Lenin could quarrel with men of such intellectual eminence. Surely, all aimed at the same end?

Lenin answered at once. "Then Plekhanov, according to you, has the same aim as we have, and I, between

ourselves, consider that he has quite another aim, although he is a materialist and not a metaphysician"—this last a hit at the "philosophers," Lunacharsky and his friends.

And this reply is so true that Gorky, without political insight, had sufficient of the artist's intuition to understand its truth. Plekhanov, the brilliant intellectuals of the party, could all see the horrors of the old régime, indeed of capitalism everywhere, but they had no real faith that it was possible to effect a complete and radical revolution in men's outlook and men's lives by means of the working class. They desired such a change—in theory they might be willing to die for it—but that it would ever actually come about, above all through the rough hands of working men, they did not in the bottom of their hearts believe.

But Lenin believed exactly this. And in this respect Gorky makes a very true observation: "I have never met in Russia, the country where the inevitability of suffering is preached as the general road to salvation, nor do I know of, any man who hated, loathed, and despised so deeply and strongly all unhappiness, grief, and suffering as Lenin. . . . Lenin was exceptionally great, in my opinion, precisely because of this feeling in him of irreconcilable, unquenchable hostility towards the suffering of humanity, his burning faith that suffering is not an essential and unavoidable part of life but an abomination which people ought and are able to sweep away." Perhaps the greatness of Lenin lay not so much in this feeling, true though Gorky's observation is, as in the understanding that humanity held its fate in its own hands, that, in Engels' words, which Lenin quoted so often, "Necessity is blind until it becomes conscious. Freedom is the consciousness of necessity."

## CHAPTER II

### LENIN'S FAITH

RUSSIA, to the Western mind, has seemed a land of pain, of suffering, of changeless patience, shot by rare lights of intense beauty, beauty of men and women, of literature and music. The men and women have usually been revolutionaries, sacrificing their whole life to the cause of struggle against the tyranny of the vilest autocracy in the world. The books of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Turgeniev, have become synonymous with pessimism in literature, though wrongly so, but above all have been distinguished by a male vigour that has made them stand out like granite rocks above their sentimental contemporaries in Western Europe. Russia seemed a land apart, neither East nor West, a land of dreams and high aspiration, of sordid vice and disgusting cruelty. To Lenin it was all these things and none of these things.

All these things because indeed all these things were part of Russia though they were not Russia. None of these things, because he saw through this cloudy superstructure to the real lives of Russian men and women beneath. He saw, not a land of changeless patience and suffering, but a people in labour ; great human forces in conflict and new worlds being born out of the bitter struggles of Russian men and women. Russia was not a country that was "neither East nor West," but a country where the unchanging, immobile East was moving, was changing, under the hammer-blows of Western capitalism.

In the conflict between a semi-Asiatic serf State and the growing demon of capitalism, of new property relations, he saw the secret of the Russian character, of Russian history.

The revolution of 1905 to 1907 was the second great crisis of that process, as the Emancipation of 1861 was the first. The triumph of capitalism was assured by 1905, though the struggle was not over yet, nor the suffering, which was deepened rather than alleviated. Lenin understood this clearly, but the "revolutionary" intellectuals, who had looked upon themselves as the leaders by divine right of the dark people, could not understand it. For them 1905 was in vain. The black travail in the villages meant nothing more than that Russia was a country accursed, that there was no way out for the sufferings of the masses, only deeper suffering, only horror piled on horror.

So one section began to seek some new philosophy which should explain and comfort at the same time. Marxism, with its hard insistence on the reality of life, of the necessity for struggle, for *changing* things, seemed to need some softening, some idealistic revision. So some of the most brilliant minds—Bogdanov, Bazarov, Lunacharsky—fell victims to the seductions of Ernest Mach, the Austrian physicist and philosopher, as to-day the war-weary intellectuals seek comfort in the idealism of an Eddington or a Bertrand Russell. Mach wished to build a philosophy which should overcome the dualism of spirit and matter by recognising our sensations as the first elements of experience which are the foundation of the physical and psychical. "Not the things (bodies), but atoms, sounds, pressures, spaces, times (what we usually call sensations), are the actual elements of the world," he wrote. Things and bodies are mere complexes of sensations.

Mach is to-day no longer fashionable as a philosopher, but his fundamental ideas are perhaps more completely accepted than ever, not only in Germany, but in England and America also, and whole new religions and varieties of "religious experience" are being built up on their basis.

There are two kinds of philosophical idealists, the frank idealist who openly seeks a philosophic basis for religion, the "modern" idealist who seeks the reconciliation of all existing contradictions, of science and religion, of matter



and spirit, of idealism and materialism. Mach belonged to the second, peculiarly irritating sort, and Lenin's clear mind responded with fury to the efforts of his former comrades, who, under cover of this confusion, were trying to "develop" Marxism. "Of course," he wrote to Gorky in 1908, "I am only a rank-and-file Marxist in philosophy. I don't consider myself so competent in these questions that I can go into print."

But it was necessary to act. So he made himself competent, in an extraordinarily short time became a master of philosophy as he was of other branches of science. His book, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, leaves no doubt of that. With intense polemical fire it destroys not only the Machian faith, but also those varieties of it which were then becoming fashionable—Henri Poincaré in France, the pragmatists in the United States, the various schools of "mathematical physicists" produced by the crisis in modern physics.

Lenin re-stated the position of dialectical materialism, the materialism of Marx and Engels, and applied it to the new theories of matter. Science had developed since Bishop Berkeley, but the fundamental problem of philosophy remains the same: Does matter exist independently of the individual, or is it but the reflection of his mental processes? Lenin replies emphatically, "The 'naïve realism' of any healthy person, who is not an inmate of a lunatic asylum, or in the school of the idealist philosophers, consists in this: that he believes reality, the environment and the things in it, to exist independently of his perception—independently of his conception of himself, in particular, and of his fellow men in general." Matter is always in motion, "sensation is one of the properties of matter in motion." "Matter is primary, and mind, consciousness, sensation, are products of a very high development. Such is the materialist theory of knowledge, which natural science instinctively holds."

Professors Eddington and Whitehead, Mr. Bertrand Russell, and others in England have developed Mach's philosophy in their various ways, have caused matter to disappear, created a "mathematical god," and in other

ways waged war upon materialism in the interests of idealism and religion. The famous American scientist, Professor Millikan, who during the war held the rank of major-general in the American army and was at the head of a research bureau which used all the scientific genius of the country in finding and perfecting new ways of destroying matter in its human form, considers that acquaintance with the development of modern physics must strengthen our consciousness of the insufficiency of human reason, that we must "respect truth and its stimulating importance." To all of which Lenin's answer is that this is only a meaningless expression of the truth that "science has succeeded in discovering new forms of matter, new forms of material motion, and has succeeded in reducing the old and the familiar to the new."

What angered Lenin more than anything else in this effort of the intellectuals in the party to graft a new philosophy on to Marxism was that it opened the door directly to religion. They became mystics, "god-creators," "god-seekers." Gorky expressed this very sharply in an article he wrote on Dostoevsky: "God-seeking should be given up, for the time being. It is a useless occupation. It is no use seeking something that has not been hidden. Without sowing you cannot reap. You have no god, you have not yet created him. Gods are not sought after—they are created; life does not invent, it creates."

The idea of a modern, intellectualised god appeared even more revolting to Lenin than the most reactionary organised religion. "A Catholic priest who violates young girls (about whom I happened to read just now in a German newspaper) is *much less* dangerous to 'democracy' than are priests who do not wear surplices, priests without vulgar religion, ideological and democratic priests, who preach the creating and making of little gods," he reproved Gorky in a letter upon the Dostoevsky article.

He looked upon religion as something obscene, as the vilest form of subjection of the human spirit. In primitive society men believed in a god because they feared nature;

in civilised class society gods were no longer a symbol of man's subjection to nature, but of man's subjection to man. "Religion is a kind of spiritual intoxicant, in which the slaves of capital drown their humanity and blunt their desire for a decent human existence." It appeared to him no less than monstrous that in the twentieth century, when man had, through his development of science, begun to storm one after another the dark fortresses of the unknown, to master the elements, even to change the forms of matter itself, there should still be people who could accept the supernatural, who could try to reconcile science with religion. The absurdity, the desecration of the human spirit, lay not so much in the actual form of the religion as in the causes which drove intelligent, cultured men to such a position.

These causes he saw in the social system itself. "In modern capitalist countries the basis of religion is primarily *social*. The roots of modern religion are deeply embedded in the social oppression of the working masses, and in their apparently complete helplessness before the blind forces of capitalism, which every day and every hour cause a thousand times more horrible suffering and torture for ordinary working folk than are caused by exceptional events such as war, earthquakes, etc. 'Fear created the gods.' Fear of the blind force of capital—blind because its action cannot be foreseen by the masses—a force which at every step in life threatens the worker and the small business man with 'sudden,' 'unexpected,' 'accidental' destruction and ruin, bringing in their train beggary, pauperism, prostitution, and deaths from starvation."

This is Lenin's indictment of religion. He believed that a Socialist society, planning and controlling production, slowly and inevitably destroying class divisions and class differences, would completely liberate men's minds, that under it humanity would reach the adult stage. He did not believe that such a State would persecute religion, which "is a private matter as far as the State is concerned," but of course he believed that all religions must become

absolutely independent of the State, voluntary associations of citizens of one faith. That in such circumstances religion would rapidly die out, he was firmly convinced. Anatole France's ironical picture of the Pope as an obscure artisan in a vast classless community is, in fact, no exaggeration at all when one follows the development of religion in the Socialist Soviet Union. The French satirist and the Russian revolutionary are here in full agreement.

In his materialism, his atheism, Lenin was at one with the greatest minds of humanity. No less interesting, no less profound, are his views on literature. Philosophy, religion, literature, are all efforts of the human spirit to abstract from life some general conception of its meaning, or perhaps, as Lenin would say of religion, to conceal its meaning. The Menshevik Dan complained that it was hopeless to fight Lenin, because for twenty-four hours out of every day he was thinking and dreaming of the revolution. That, if somewhat exaggerated, is nevertheless approximately true, but Lenin did not look upon revolution as some mere change in political control. For him it meant a fundamental change in the relation between people, affecting every branch of human thought and activity.

It was from this point of view that he approached literature. Those writers who cared about changing things, who passionately fought for the liberation of man from spiritual and economic bondage, appealed to him, answered some real need in his nature, forcing him to read and re-read them. It must be admitted that these, after all, are the greatest, those whose achievement stands high and challenging above the troubled level of man's intellectual life : in his own country, Herzen, Pisarev, Chernishevsky, Pushkin, Nekrassov, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gorky ; among modern European writers, Zola, Hauptmann, Verhaeren ; while the classics of all countries were his familiar companions.

Undoubtedly Tolstoy was the writer whom he most deeply admired, who appealed to him most strongly. For Lenin had an exile's weakness—he passionately loved his

own country and his own countrymen. The steppes and forests, the wide rivers of Russia, were in his blood, while for the common people, peasants and workmen, of Russia, he had the deepest love and admiration. Tolstoy with superb art reproduced this Russian countryside, above all the Russian peasant, in his stories. Further, Tolstoy's genius reflected the real torture of the Russian people, the slow-growing but bitter revolt against intolerable social conditions, reflected it with a truth that was invincible. The period from 1861 to 1904, from the Emancipation to the First Revolution, is, as Lenin rightly emphasises, the period of the long flowering of Tolstoy's genius. What he wrote before and after these years is of lesser significance, the literature of his adolescence and decay.

He rightly calls him "mirror of the Russian Revolution," but a mirror reflecting, not some smooth picture of undisturbed development, but a tortured mass of contradictions, the contradictions of life itself, which is never simple. "On the one hand we have the gifted writer who is not only able to draw an incomparable picture of Russian life, but is able to produce first-class world literature. On the other hand we have the landowner wearing the martyr's crown in the name of Christ. On the one hand a remarkably strong, direct, and sincere protest against social lies and hypocrisies. On the other hand the 'Tolstoyan,' that is, the exhausted, hysterical, misery-mongering Russian intellectual, who, publicly beating his breast, cries: 'I am bad, I am vile, but I am striving for moral self-perfection; I no longer eat meat but live on rice cutlets.' On the one hand ruthless criticism of capitalist exploitation, exposure of Government violence, of the comedy of justice, and State administration; revelation of the depths of the contradictions between the growth of wealth and of the acquirements of civilisation and the growth of poverty, of the brutalising and torturing of the working masses. On the other hand the fanatical preaching of 'non-resistance to evil.' On the one hand the soberest realism, and the rending away of all and every kind of mask. On



the other hand the advocacy of one of the most corrupt things existing in the world ; religion—the attempt to replace the official State priests by priests of moral conviction, i.e. the cultivation of the most subtle and therefore the most especially loathsome kind of clericalism. In truth :

*You are poor ; you are abundant ;  
You are powerful ; you are helpless ;  
Mother Russia ! ”*

The artist who shuts himself away from life, or the artist, no less irritating, who considers himself superior to life (a kind of juvenile intellectual arrogance unpleasantly common in our own country), Lenin considered to be a humbug. To consider oneself “above politics,” or to be concerned “with none of these things,” was to him simply a confession of spiritual and intellectual bankruptcy. Tolstoy, like Balzac, also a supremely great artist, was a political writer, not in the crude sense that the characters were made to utter ready-made opinions of their author, but because they truly reflected the life and social contradictions of their times. Balzac, indeed, so true an artist was he, reflected most faithfully the development of those classes and political ideas most completely opposed to his own cherished convictions.

“Tolstoy’s criticism of society,” Lenin explains, “is to such an extent distinguished by its strength of feeling, its passion, conviction, freshness, sincerity, fearlessness in the desire to ‘go to the root,’ to find a real reason for the suffering of the masses, that this criticism really reflects a revolution in the views of millions of peasants, who have emerged from serfdom into freedom, only to find that this freedom means further horrors of ruin, famine, roofless existence amid the city ‘sharks,’ and so on. Tolstoy so truly expresses this mood that he himself brings into his teaching their naïveté, their alienation from politics, their mysticism, the desire to leave the world, ‘non-resistance to evil,’ feeble curses with regard to capitalism and ‘the power of money.’ The protest of millions of peasants and

their despair, that is what was fused into the teaching of Tolstoy. The representatives of the modern working-class movement know that they have got something to protest about, but nothing to despair of."

Non-resistance to evil, passive acceptance of destiny, was the very opposite of the male and vigorous optimism of Lenin, but he understood very well the roots of this outlook, its relation to Russian conditions, to the poverty and oppression in which millions of peasants dragged out their existence. There is a degree of poverty when life means little to man, a degree of wretchedness when all resistance, all struggle, can only seem the merest vanity. The peasants of India and of China, the Oriental submission and fatalism of these great masses of humanity, are examples of this. Something of the same outlook entered into the philosophy of Gandhi, who was consciously a disciple of Tolstoy for a time, though it would be far from true to identify the worldly wise, rather sly, and more than a little sophisticated mysticism of Gandhi with the passionate and fearless sincerity of Tolstoy. One feels that Gandhi, affected like Tolstoy by that vast ocean of peasant misery, has nevertheless allowed his spiritual ear to give more ready hearing to the twin devils of the Ahmedabad millowner and the Bombay lawyer-moneylender. Tolstoy's whole life is a struggle with the landlord and nobleman in his nature. Gandhi's whole life is a gradual submission to the landlord moneylender and millowner in his nature.

Lenin sees and understands Tolstoy's fatalism, but he sees also the forces at work which are going to destroy for ever that fatalism, to bring the Russian muzhik on to the arena of history as an active participator in the drama of the world's progress. Tolstoy thought that the historians' view that progress is a law of nature was contradicted by the "whole of the so-called East." "There is no general law of the forward movement of humanity," he declared, "as the motionless Eastern peoples prove to us." Such an outlook, pessimistic, with no faith in the future, demanding non-resistance to "evil"—that is, to the new forces of

capitalism—is, as Lenin points out, itself the result of an immense change in the old social order. The masses of the peasantry, brought up in serfdom, sucking in their beliefs and traditions with their mothers' milk, are unable to understand. "*What kind of new society, exactly what social forces, are forming, and how ; what social forces are capable of bringing deliverance from the numberless, especially sharp evils which belong to periods of 'change.'*"

Such a period of change in Russia was the period of the flowering of Tolstoy's genius, 1861 to 1904, coming to a head in the great popular insurrection of 1905, which showed, according to Lenin, what were the new forces which were to deliver Russia. But 1905 did more than that. It put an end to the myth of the "unchanging" East. Hard on the heels of the events in Russia followed the revolutions in Persia, Turkey, and China, the first rise of a great national movement in India. "The year 1905 was the beginning of the end of 'Eastern' immobility." Who to-day would be bold enough to say that Lenin was not right? Yet even Lenin in 1911, when he wrote those words, could hardly have foreseen that twenty years later the Russian word "Soviet," or council, the political child of 1905, would be known to the workers of Bombay and the coolies of Canton, that his portrait would be carried on banners through the streets of foul Indian slums or appear on bank-notes in the depths of the Chinese interior.

Russian literature, more perhaps than that of any other modern country, reflects the storms that swept the land, the tremendous moral and political crisis of the noblest minds in the country that was caused by the unsolved conflicts within the State. Perhaps it is this that gives it its intense vitality. For a Russian writer to ignore or gloss over those conflicts was impossible, if he were to have any contact whatever with reality. In his article on the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Herzen, Lenin sums up the development of the intellectual life of his country, points out clearly its future, shows how it is impossible to understand Russian literature apart from the development of

the Russian Revolution, that the struggle for freedom of the Russian mind is inextricably bound up with the struggle for freedom of the Russian people. "When we honour Herzen," he wrote, "we clearly see the three generations, the three classes, which have been at work in the Russian Revolution. In the beginning—the nobles and landlords, the Decembrists and Herzen. Narrow was the circle of these revolutionaries. They were terribly far away from the people. But their cause was not lost. The Decembrists inspired Herzen. Herzen started a revolutionary agitation. The revolutionary intellectuals seized on this agitation, widened it, strengthened it, hardened it, beginning with Chernishevsky and ending with the heroes of the People's Will. The circle of fighters grew wider, the connection with the people closer. 'Young pilots of the coming storm,' Herzen called them. But the storm was not yet."

The storm began in 1905, it blew itself out in the tragic years of 1917-18, and the pilot was Lenin, spokesman of the youngest class of all, the disinherited, the working men. "From Herzen we can draw a lesson," he concludes, "the lesson that unselfish devotion to the revolution and the appeal to the people with a revolutionary faith are not in vain, even when many scores of years divide the sowing from the harvest."

There is a sturdy optimism about Lenin's faith that cuts him off from the intellectuals of his time. This is a man who believes in humanity, who can feel its tremendous creative powers and believe in them intensely. In this way he is himself part of all that is healthy and vital in the intellectual life of man, the heir of the robust genius of the ages, the spirit that struggles and wins. In an age which considers it almost indecent to suggest that there has been such a thing as progress, which denies or runs away from all that is vital in the past of the race, it needed a rare courage and a strong mind to assert that what is best is what will live, even though to live should mean an epoch of struggle and horror such as mankind has not gone through since the collapse of feudalism in Europe.

It is hard for the intellectual to-day to accept that literature can be a matter of party, of battle. In the midst of the collapse of the culture which gave him intellectual life he renounces the defence of culture, retires from battle. Capitalism in its death-throes has enshrined the bandit and the gangster as its leaders, has devoted its Press, its pulpit, its theatre, its literature, its cinema, to their service, has even created a gangster religion and called it Fascism. The intellectual dully comprehends that something is wrong ; as State after State falls into the power of the gangster he slinks into impotent exile, or sells himself body and soul to the service of the gunman and the brothel, to the writing of " crime " stories or the exalting of lust. But that he should fight tooth and nail for his heritage occurs to him rarely. Yet the names which humanity has hitherto revered beyond all others are the names of men who have fought tooth and nail, of men whose work breathed the spirit of party, which must not be confused with faction, or with the gangster politics to which we are ourselves accustomed. Not so long ago a Dreyfus affair could still rouse the fighting spirit of humanity to battle, but to-day the Sacco and Vanzetti murder, the lunatic burning of its public buildings by the party ruling a great State to provide an excuse for a pogrom of its enemies, the judicial crime at Meerut—these things can only rouse a weary sigh from the intellectual, a wish like Pilate's to be troubled with none of these things.

It is a paradox of history that Lenin, who of all men stood on the side of light in the unending struggle against darkness (the Manicheans glimpsed something of an eternal truth), should have been accused of the crushing of the noblest instincts of humanity because he always insisted on the essential party character of intellectual activity. All his lifetime he met these jeers, which were akin to the despairing cry of the Menshevik who called for death to remove this stubborn man who dared to think of revolution for twenty-four hours in a day. At the height of the revolution of 1905, a few days after he returned to Russia,



Lenin dealt with this very question of the party character of literature in an article which he wrote for the Bolshevik daily paper.

“In literature,” he argues, “there can be no dispute that the greatest scope must be given to personal initiative, to individual preferences, to breadth of thought and imagination, to form and content. But this does not mean that literature can stand above the battle, above party, only that it must not be stupidly identified with the other sections of party work. Capitalist society uses a double censorship on literature : the censorship which is open and direct—that of sedition and libel laws, the censorship of the libraries and the Church ; but it has another, more subtle and dangerous censorship, that of the commercial relationships which lie at the bottom of every phase of life in that society.” The working class alone can break that double censorship. “We wish to create, and we shall create,” he declares, “a free Press not only in the police sense of these words, but also in the sense of freedom from capital, of freedom from careerism ; but that is not all : also in the sense of freedom from bourgeois-anarchist individualism.”

Ah, there's the snag, the intellectual at once exclaims. Under these fine words is hidden the attack on the holy of holies, the rape of my chastity, my sacred individual freedom of creation. And, blushing like a startled prude, he calls the aid of the policeman of capitalist society to protect him from the rude hand.

But Lenin understands very well with whom he is dealing. “These last words,” he readily admits, “seem a paradox or a mockery of the reader. What ! cries out some intellectual, a fiery defender of freedom. What ! You want to subordinate to collectivism such a subtle, individual affair as literary creation ! You want the workers by majority votes to decide questions of science, philosophy, æsthetics ! You deny the absolute freedom of the absolutely individual act of ideal creation ! ”

Calm yourselves, gentlemen, he insinuates. Firstly, I am only talking of these writers who are on our side, party

writers. You are free to write as you please, and the party is free to demand from those who enter it acceptance of its ideas. But secondly—and in that secondly Lenin cunningly concealed his death-blow—but secondly, “gentlemen bourgeois-individualists, we must show you that your speeches about absolute freedom are simply hypocrisy. In a society founded on the power of money, in a society where the masses of toilers are poverty-stricken and a handful of the wealthy flourish parasitically, there can be no real and actual ‘freedom.’ Are you free of your bourgeois publisher, Mr. Writer? Of your bourgeois public which demands framed pornography from you in pictures, or prostitution as a ‘supplement’ to the ‘sacred’ scenic art? Surely this absolute freedom is a bourgeois or anarchist phrase (for anarchism as an outlook is bourgeois psychology developed to an extreme). To live in society and be free of society is impossible. The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist, actress, is only a masked (or a hypocritically masked) dependence on the money-bag, corruption, the *souteneur*.”

The Frenchman Julien Benda wrote a remarkable book—*La Trahison des Clercs* (*The Treason of the Intellectuals*). And it is true that the limp and lifeless pen of the modern intellectual is no longer capable of fighting for his heritage. Lenin's battle, Lenin's faith, were a battle, not for death, but for life; a faith, not in renunciation, non-resistance, or reaction to mediævalism, but in the fresh vigour and eternal creative power of man, embodied now in the class which holds the future of the world in its hands, the working class. It is easy for the ignorant, the purveyors of half-truths as pure gold, to sneer at Lenin, to sneer at the faith he stands for; but there must be few people to-day who do not have an uncomfortable feeling that perhaps there is something in it, that history with horrible emphasis is proving where truth is. England had a revolution, also, nearly three centuries ago, and the greatest of her revolutionary writers wrote these prophetic words:

“Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant Nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking

her invincible locks : Methinks I see her as an Eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam ; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance ; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.”

One feels that Milton is closer to a man like Lenin than he is to many who to-day arrogate to themselves the right to speak for England.

## CHAPTER III

### GATHERING STORM

IN AUGUST 1910 the Second International held its congress at Copenhagen and Lenin was again one of the representatives of Russian Socialism. He had already known in April that he would be at Copenhagen, and wrote to his mother proposing that they should meet at Stockholm. "If the journey is not too tiring for you it would be more than wonderful to pass a week in Stockholm!" They met, as arranged, in September. The old woman, who had seen all her children, and her children's husbands and wives, one after another, undergo arrest and exile, who had lost almost simultaneously her husband and her splendid eldest boy, was still unbowed. But the shadow of death was in her eyes, and both his wife and his sister relate how sadly Lenin's glance clung to the frail figure at the steamer's rail when they parted. He had a certain feeling it was for the last time. She died in 1916, a few months before the events that were to justify her children's sufferings and her own.

That summer he had rested more than usual, first at Pornic on the Bay of Biscay, then a short trip to Capri, to the home of Maxim Gorky. Here the grim life of an exile in Paris seemed to fall away from him, strength and confidence to return, as though he were able to see the slow revival that was just beginning in Russia. Gorky describes him at this moment: "With the same absorption he could play chess, look through *The History of Dress*, argue for hours with comrades, and go fishing; walk over the rocky paths to Capri, red-hot from the honest rays of the southern sun, take delight in the golden colours of the furze and the black-skinned fisher urchins. And at night, listening to

stories of Russia, of the country, he would sigh enviously : ‘ How little I know of Russia ! Simbirsk, Kazan, Petersburg, exile, and—that’s about all ! ’ ”

From Capri he went to Copenhagen to prepare for the congress—a man renewed, full of that bold, half-humorous confidence that fitted him equally well to stand alone on the battle-field, to organise a forlorn hope, or to lead a victorious army. Copenhagen was to be something in the nature of a forlorn hope. At the International Congress at Stuttgart in 1907 it had already been clear that there was a new spirit becoming dominant in the European Labour movement. Despite the recent events in Russia, the rising of the Moscow workers, the leaders of the German party—which was by far the largest in the International—were beginning to speak less and less in the tone of men at the head of a great world movement of liberation, and more and more in the accustomed voice of the sober statesman : the man who sees in politics not the struggle of millions for bread and life but the polite moves and counter-moves of a well-regulated game between gentlemen.

At Stuttgart, perhaps because of the Russian events, opposition was still strong. Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, to some degree Karl Kautsky, with the backing and close co-operation of the Russian delegates, led a violent and partially successful counter-attack on the heroes of parliamentary debate. But at Copenhagen the situation was changed. The Russian revolution was crushed in blood and agony. Mr. Lloyd George was introducing “ Socialism ” into England with the help of the Labour Party. Even the Kaiser was on good terms with the Socialist Deputies in the Reichstag, and the “ Royal Prussian Socialism ” of Lassalle, which Marx had laughed to scorn in Bismarck’s lifetime, was once more in favour. Kautsky was now on the brink of throwing all his great authority on to the side of the majority. The cause of revolution seemed again a forlorn hope.

Only one thing, however, could have made Lenin despair—the knowledge that the workers themselves had given up



the struggle. In this respect, however, history was on his side, for the closer to the "respectability" society demands from its politicians the official Labour leaders grew, the greater and more intense became the struggles of the workers themselves. It was not only in Russia that militancy was raising its head again. In Germany a period of violent strikes was beginning, of martial law and military arrogance in the working-class towns of Saxony and the Ruhr. Even in England a few more months was to see the beginning of that remarkable pre-war wave of strikes and social unrest which was to have its culmination in the "revolution from the right," led by the Conservative Party in 1913 and 1914, over the Ulster question.

At Copenhagen, Lenin took the very practical step of calling together all the left-wing delegates of the various countries for a conference. Poles, Germans, Dutch, Scandinavians, Bulgarians, for the first time under Lenin's lead, met together and discussed common questions of revolutionary policy. Here in fact was the embryo of the Communist International which he was to form in 1919, and which he had had in mind ever since 1903 when the split occurred between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the Russian Party.

Lenin was the official representative of the Russian Social Democrats on the International Socialist Bureau, as the executive of the Second International was then called. He took a most active part in the affairs of world Socialism and had a most complete knowledge of the movement in the different countries. When, for example, the question arose after the Stuttgart Congress of 1907 as to whether or not the British Labour Party should be admitted to the International, Lenin defended a point of view remarkable not only for its realism, but for its deep knowledge of the character of the British Labour Movement.

The constitution of the International admitted only parties which accepted the idea of class struggle. The Labour Party, in its youth as in its old age, was a strenuous opponent of all forms of class struggle and a firm believer

in class collaboration. On these grounds the British Socialist delegates, led by the bearded and silk-hatted Henry Mayers Hyndman, opposed the admission of the Labour Party. Kautsky was for its admission as being against the class struggle in theory but carrying it on in practice.

Lenin, with his usual strong sense of reality, pointed out that both points of view were wrong. Hyndman, with dogmatic sectarianism, wished to keep out of the international movement a great party composed entirely of workers. Kautsky was only deceiving himself if he thought that either in theory or in practice the Labour Party carried on the class struggle. But it should certainly be admitted, because it was the first great step towards the organisation of such a party in England.

British affairs and the British Labour movement always interested Lenin keenly, and he wrote more about them than about those of any other country except his own. Particularly was he interested in the methods by which the rulers of Britain succeeded in keeping the support of masses of working men, members of the most strongly organised proletariat in the world, for a class State based on more glaring differences of riches and poverty than could be found in almost any other country. He explained this in two ways—first, that a large section of the workers shared with the bourgeoisie a privileged standard of living guaranteed them by the exploitation of their great colonial empire ; second, the use of an almost perfect system of social demagoguery which found its highest expression in the policy of Mr. Lloyd George which his enemies called “Limehousing” and which Lenin preferred to call “Lloyd Georgeism.”

If, even in Britain, the home of the “Conservative working man,” and more particularly of the “Conservative labour leader,” there was developing a great strike movement, if the army was being used here against the striking workers as in the dock strikes and the famous affair of Tonyandy, in Russia of the Tsars there were movements of an even more serious character to claim Lenin’s attention.

From the end of 1910, after he returned to Paris from Copenhagen, it became clear that a new crisis was maturing. The number of strikes and of peasant demonstrations was increasing rapidly, despite the land reforms of Stolypin and the swift industrial development fostered by the influx of foreign capital after 1905.

In 1910 there were 928 different acts of violence of a political or semi-political character recorded by the police as committed by the despairing peasantry. The following year brought with it a famine. "The harvest failure of 1911," wrote Lenin, "is a fresh reminder of death for the whole of the present régime." But it was in the following year that an event as terrible as the Bloody Sunday of 1905 showed the whole world that the gallows and the bullet, however unsparingly used, are no remedies for terrible social evils. Neither Stolypin's "reforms" nor Stolypin's "necktie" had solved the threatening agrarian problem, nor had prison and execution of their leaders solved the question of bread for the workers.

The strike in the Lena goldfields of February and March 1912 was the event which brought the Russian workman again to the front of the revolutionary stage. The then administration of the Russian Lenskoie Company included among its shareholders such distinguished persons as the Minister Count Witte and even, it is alleged, the Empress Marie Fedorovna herself. It worked the fields on the River Lena in the far north of Siberia, a place desolate beyond imagining, weeks away from the railway, a prey to almost eternal night in the six bitter months of winter, and the haunt of clouds of mosquitoes in the brief and burning summer. The goldfields' administration was at once employer, policeman, and judge, the civil and military authority. Its profits were enormous, yet just before the strike it had lowered the miserable wages of the workers by twenty to twenty-five per cent.

It was not the wage question, however, which caused the strike, but the barbarous conditions of work. Housing and hospital arrangements were unspeakable, very few workers

had their wives with them in the awful waste, but their wives, due to the shortage of women, were expected to act as both the servants and the prostitutes of the administration. The food was obscene (the last straw was the discovery of the sexual organs of a horse in the men's dinner), and the hours of work unlimited. To complaints there was only one answer : imprisonment.

An officer of the gendarmerie, one of the heroes of January 9th, and a company of infantry were at once ordered to the goldfields by the Government in Petersburg, and the strike committee, which was in negotiation with the administration, was arrested. The next morning a peaceful and unarmed demonstration of men and women came to ask for their release. The soldiers opened rapid fire, killing 270 and wounding 250. News of this awful massacre in the frozen tundra flashed all over the country, and roused the indignation of the workers to a pitch unknown since 1905. The rage with which the news was received was increased a hundredfold by the insolent cold-bloodedness of the responsible Minister, who announced in the Duma, in answer to the Social Democratic Deputies, that "so it was and so it will be in the future."

The challenge of humanity personified in its vilest form—the feudal landlord and capitalist exploiter combined—could not be ignored. The Government had declared a civil war on the working class. They answered by a great wave of protest strikes in every industrial centre in the country. In April over 300,000 workers struck in protest at the shooting, and on May Day no less than half a million workers joined the movement. The movement had a clear-cut political character, and at all the demonstrations the Bolshevik slogans of the Eight Hour Day, Confiscation of the Landlords' Lands, and Overthrow of the Autocracy were enthusiastically adopted. More interesting still was the fact that almost all the resolutions adopted by the strikers ended with the call "Long live Socialism !" The Russian workers were already clear that their revolution would not stop at the overthrow of the Tsar and the landlords, and

the long shadows of 1917 were stretching darkly over the streets and squares of the factory towns of the Empire.

The organised Labour movement was growing in strength as well as in militancy. Trade unionism in Russia was still in its infancy. The unions had been almost completely suppressed after 1905, and only in 1912 did they begin to develop once more—when 63 unions, with about 15,000 members, were in existence. The numbers were ridiculously small, but the police did everything in their power to restrict their growth, and when, nevertheless, in spite of their efforts they grew, closed them down on the most trivial pretexts. Only a year later the number of trade union members was about 45,000. The number of members in each was naturally small; in 1914 the Petersburg textile workers' union had only 888 members, though the metal-workers' grew from 3,353 in 1913 to 12,000 when the union was suppressed in 1914. There was neither provincial nor national organisation, but a strong trade union Press was created.

The development of the unions, the creation of a State insurance law with a mixed administration, gave big chances for the illegal party of the Bolsheviks to carry on their work in the open. The Mensheviks and Trotsky's Centre fraction were united in favour of a completely "legal" movement around the unions and insurance organs, confining the workers' movement to purely economic questions and excluding politics. In spite of the favourable conditions for such a policy, it failed completely to win any hold over the workers. In the biggest unions, the metal-workers' and printers', the Bolsheviks won the leadership, and by vigorous work in the factories got Bolshevik workmen elected to the leading places in the new insurance scheme.

The elections to the Fourth Duma in 1912, though carried on, so far as the workers were concerned, in conditions of terror, ended in the election of seven Menshevik Deputies and six Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks claimed, with justice, that the actual voting in the primary elections (the method



of election was not so much indirect as positively tortuous) had given them an overwhelming majority, but the affairs of the Social Democratic fraction for some time remained absolutely in the hands of the Mensheviks. In 1913 the Bolsheviks broke away and set up their independent fraction. The Duma elections, the platform of the Duma itself, and the immunity granted to Deputies gave great possibilities for organisation and revolutionary agitation to the Bolsheviks, of which, under Lenin's guidance, they made the very most.

Yet another sign of the time was the existence and healthy growth of a working-class Press. Two daily papers, the Bolshevik *Pravda* ("Truth") and the Menshevik *Luch* ("The Ray"), were in existence from 1912 to the outbreak of war. *Pravda* had the largest circulation and much the greatest support among the workers, as expressed in the very practical form of collections for the paper. On the basis of the Duma votes and the support for their paper, the Bolsheviks reckoned that at the beginning of 1914 they had behind them about two-thirds of the Russian industrial workers.

The strike movement in 1913 and 1914 took on proportions which surpassed even the strikes that heralded 1905, and with the significant difference that there was no room here for Father Gapon, that the workers now followed exclusively Social Democrats and these mostly of the most revolutionary wing. Attacks on the workers' Press and the trade unions led only to the strikes taking on a more and more political character, even though their beginnings were usually purely economic. One cannot help being struck by the great heroism and intense solidarity of these Russian workers. A strike at one factory almost invariably spread to dozens of others, often resulting in almost a general stoppage, despite the mass arrests and shootings which were the equally invariable means employed against the workers.

The year 1914 was one of intense industrial unrest. A quarter of a million strikers were registered in January. In March there was a great strike movement in Petersburg,

caused by the poisoning of women workers in rubber and chemical factories. In June the Baku oil-workers, under the leadership of the local Bolshevik organisation, declared a general strike. The employers refused all negotiations, put the city under martial law, evicted the strikers from their homes, arrested and exiled hundreds of the most active workers, cut off electric light and water supplies, in fact used any and every means to break the spirit of the workers, mostly Persians and Turks. Collections for the Baku strikers were held in all the Petersburg factories, and very soon the collections developed into sympathetic strikes. The unprovoked shooting of the workers at the Putilov factory led to a general protest strike, to widespread conflicts with the police, to demonstrations, and the erection of barricades in the working-class streets—the first since 1905.

The first days of July were days full of alarm. It was this moment that was chosen by President Poincaré, the elected representative of the French bondholders, to pay a visit to the Tsar, the autocratic ruler of their Russian debtors. Poincaré's visit, as is now known, was no accident of politeness between the heads of two great States, but a definite move in the events that were to come to a head in August. Poincaré landed in a Petersburg that was under martial law. The centre of the town through which he drove in state was cordoned off by impenetrable cordons of troops from the factory areas. The spectre of revolution was abroad again, and if in a few days the cry of "the country in danger" was to drive it underground once more, it was only to ensure that it would be strengthened and armed a hundredfold more terribly for the inevitable reckoning.

The health and temperament of some people are in remarkable sympathy with nature, not a purely psychological sympathy but a kind of direct contact. Lenin's health and temperament were in such a direct contact and sympathy with the development of the Russian Revolution. The rise of the Labour movement, not only in Russia, but in the other countries of Europe, the first revolutions in Turkey, Persia, and China, affected him as some people

are affected by a fresh and sunny spring : filled him with a furious energy, cleared his vision, and tautened his nerves, tormenting and inspiring him at once.

He felt he was living in a new era, was full of passionate conviction that the development of world capitalism was leading straight to catastrophe, that, just as Marx and Engels lived in the period of storms and revolutions that signalised the birth and stabilisation of capitalism, he was witnessing the beginning of the storms and revolutions that were to herald its downfall. Above all he knew and believed that the next great storm must come again in Russia, and that this time its effects would be felt the world over. Apart from his own few thousand followers, perhaps there were not another ten thousand people in the whole world who in 1911 thought the same as Lenin, and, of those ten thousand, perhaps but ten who had the same passionate certainty.

No one now accuses Lenin of being a fanatic. If the world did not realise exactly what was happening to it, most thinking people on the eve of the war realised that something new and revolutionary was at work in society. The Labour question burst into the consciousness of the world with terrible force. In many countries men's minds began to run on the lines of civil war—in Germany where the insolence of the Junker caste was growing beyond all bearing, in England, even, where the landlords and certain of the industrialists were arming bands of "volunteers."

In literature a new note of alarm and unrest was sounded. Verhaeren wrote his great poetic dramas ; Hauptmann his tragedies of German social life ; Romain Rolland his epic of a new Europe, in *Jean Christophe* ; while the mordant pen of Anatole France, the restless satire of Shaw, exposed strange evils, reflected violent clashes that the smooth optimism of the last century had held in firm suppression. Other voices too were heard, voices that hailed the tramp of armed men, the glory of nationalism, the eternal right of the strong over the weak, and the armies themselves became slowly and painfully a part of the consciousness of

man again, because the days of the professional soldier were over, the nations were now in arms. Lastly, a strange contradiction, while the first shots in national war were being fired in the Balkans and North Africa, in the civilised West, in Germany, France, England, and the United States, the uniformed and armed masses were being used to shoot down the drab and unarmed workers of the mines and factories.

All these portents found confused echo in the consciousness of mankind. But Lenin saw no confusion in them, but the inexorable working out of man's destiny, the death of a whole civilisation in the agonies of war and civil war. The last years of peace he spent in feverish preparation for war.

The majority of the leaders of European Labour, the overwhelming majority, while they saw well enough the tragic end to which events were marching so rapidly, had none of Lenin's belief that the only salvation for the majority of mankind, for the wage-worker and the poor peasant, was in acceptance of the challenge of civil war, of preparing for a death struggle with the group of exploiters in each country who were threatening to drown the world in blood. The habits and the advantages of that long period of peaceful development and technical progress were in their blood. They were men of the parliamentary lobby and the fashionable *salon* rather than of the rough and tumble of the toiler's life. If many of them shared the intellectual pacifism of the advanced thought of their time, it had also become a habit with them to carry that pacifism into political life, to cease to believe in the possibility of violent struggle, in the virtue of the strike as a method of settling the war of the capitalist on the wage-earner, of the demonstration as a means of impressing the ruling classes, in the words "socialist revolution."

The strange spectacle was witnessed that as the doctrines of blood and iron, of the divine right of reaction, became more openly accepted and practised by the parties of the right, those of the left hastened to affirm their belief in non-resistance, in co-operation of the unarmed victim with the armed oppressor.

In Russia there was the same division of opinion in the Workers' Party, only with this difference, that here the minority were Socialists of the pacifist, reformist type, the majority followed the revolutionary policy of Lenin. The reason lay not only in the fact that the Russian workers had experience of revolution, but also in the intense class antagonisms within the country itself, which made any other policy a farce. After 1905 the Mensheviks had given up in practice the struggle against the Tsar. They stood for the utilisation only of legal forms of struggle, for organisation on the economic field, a policy which in practice meant the liquidation of the illegal underground revolutionary organisation of the party. Since the London Congress of 1907, the Russian Social Democrats were still in name a united party, but the policy of "Liquidationism," as it came to be called, brought about a final and complete split.

Lenin was the leader of the fight against the Liquidators, and he found an unexpected and powerful, if rather uncertain, ally in Plekhanov. Plekhanov was shocked at the unrevolutionary, anti-Marxian attitude of the Liquidators, who proposed to abandon the fight for the Republic, for the agrarian revolution, in favour of a vague programme of trade union organisation and support of the Liberal elements in the Duma. Martov and Trotsky were their leaders, the latter, as usual, attempting to occupy an independent position between the warring fractions, but using his bitter and unscrupulous pen to the utmost against the Bolsheviks and particularly against Lenin.

In Paris the new conflict in the party had the usual effect among the exiles—a great increase in scandals and violent squabbles, trying to the nerves and temper alike. "Among our people here," Lenin writes to his sister Anna in the spring of 1912, "there is worse wrangling and mud-slinging than there has been for a long time. All the groups and sub-groups are in arms against the last conference and its organisers, so that things have literally got to blows at the meetings here. In a word, there is so little here that is



even interesting, much less good, that it is hardly worth writing."

Lenin is referring to the famous Prague Conference held in January of 1912. Just as in the crisis which followed the split of 1903 he worked for a party congress at which the Russian rank and file should be represented and to whom he could directly put his point of view, so through 1911 he worked for another such meeting of the party workers from Russia to settle once for all the question of the Liquidators. All through 1911 he worked for the calling of the conference, helped by experienced conspirators like Piatnitsky whose task was to get the delegates safely over the frontier. In a letter to Niemets, a leading Czech Socialist, he asks for help in arranging the meeting.

"A few of the organisations of our party intend to hold a conference (abroad of course). The number of delegates will be about twenty to twenty-five. Will it not be possible to organise this conference in Prague for about a week? The most important thing for us is the possibility of organising the affair in a *super conspirative* manner. Nobody, no organisation, must know of it. The conference is a *Social Democratic one*, that is a legal one according to European laws, but the majority of the delegates *do not have passports* and cannot use their own names."

So the little group, with the help of the Czech Socialists, gathered in Prague, slipping secretly over the Russian frontiers, either on foot, guided through the forests by smugglers, or in disguise and with false passports through the ordinary channels. Among them were two spies, one of whom, Roman Malinovsky, a Petersburg metal-worker, won Lenin's confidence, was elected to the Fourth Duma and looked upon as an outstanding figure in the party. These men were mostly practical revolutionaries, direct from their underground activities in Russia, and they unanimously accepted Lenin's policy, expelled the Liquidators from the party, and elected a new Central Committee.

The Prague Conference was the real foundation of the

Bolsheviks as a separate party, though of course ever since 1903 they had existed as a tendency in the Russian movement—the only consistently revolutionary tendency. From now on it was only a question of a very short time before they had their own daily newspaper, the *Pravda*, their own fraction of six in the Tsar's Duma.

But this was only the beginning of the fight. The Mensheviks at once denounced the Prague decisions, and, in August, Trotsky succeeded in forming an alliance of all the anti-Bolshevik elements, who sank their differences in common hatred of the "sectarian" Lenin and his followers. This alliance, known as the "August bloc," became the target for Lenin's polemical fury. He had little patience with men who could drop differences of so-called "principle" in order to form a thoroughly unprincipled alliance against a revolutionary party. He was acutely conscious of the coming of a new revolutionary situation, and was determined that this time it should be met not by unknown groups of exiles but by a party of revolutionary working men hardened by experience of struggle.

Plekhanov's support was important because of his international reputation, but he could not be relied on. He would not reply to important letters, in order to avoid having to give an unpleasant decision, and Lenin in despair wrote to Gorky, just before Prague, that "Plekhanov is wobbling—that always happens with him before a crisis ; it is a kind of disease."

But, luckily, Russia was producing other leaders. During 1912 a new Central Committee was created which included some of the men who were to be the real leaders of the coming struggle : Sverdlov, first President of the Soviet Republic, Ordzhonikidze, Stalin, who, in the brief intervals between prison and exile, lived secretly in the great cities of the Empire building up the party organisation.

Gorky, living in Capri, far away both from the struggle in Russia and the internal disputes of the movement, shook his head sadly, and wrote to Lenin at the time when the quarrel with the Liquidators was at its height : " You are

all a lot of brawlers." Lenin answers the charge with heat : " The bourgeois likes to shout about the squabbles of the Social Democrats. Liberals, S.R.s (Socialist Revolutionaries), don't look seriously at burning questions, hang on to others, play at diplomacy, get along with eclecticism. The Social Democrats differ from all of them because with Social Democrats a squabble is the struggle of groups with *deep* and clear ideological roots, but with *those others* a squabble is outwardly smoothed over, inwardly empty, trifling, wretched. I would never, not for anything, exchange the sharp struggle of currents among the Social Democrats for the smooth emptiness and poverty of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Co."

He concludes his report with a triumphant postscript : " And in Russia there is a revolutionary rise in the tide, not any kind of rise, but a really revolutionary one. We too have succeeded in establishing our daily *Pravda*—thanks, by the way, to that very conference at which the fools are yapping."

This change in the tide in Russia brought a change in his personal position. The hard exile in Paris could be left, for it was essential to be nearer to the struggle, to direct operations from the very frontier. In July he moved with Krupskaya to Cracow in Galicia, in Austrian Poland. Here the very air reminded them of Russia, though the feudal customs of the local landlords aroused their curious indignation. The hatred of the Poles for Tsarism was a big help in their work, and the Austrian Government hardly interfered at all, so that now they could be almost in direct contact with the Russian organisations. At this time, too, they made the acquaintance of the young and lively Bukharin ; of Safarov, the genial and brilliant young Tartar, whose views on the national question greatly interested Ilyich. Stalin was in charge of the work of the party in Petersburg and secretly supervised *Pravda*, while Zinoviev joined Lenin in Cracow and under his guidance helped in the journalistic and polemical work. Slowly, but surely, the " young pilots " were being grouped and trained for the coming storm.

This feeling of closeness to the struggle comes out in a letter to Gorky written from Cracow in the early autumn. "You ask why I am in Austria. Between ourselves the Central Committee has established its bureau here : it's near the frontier, which we make use of ; nearer to Petersburg—we get papers from there on the third day ; it's ever so much easier to write for the Petersburg Press, and collaboration is better arranged. Squabbles are less here, which can be counted as plus. There is no good library. That's a minus. It's rotten without books."

Meetings and conferences with the active workers from Russia became much more frequent, the direction of the party's work was now moved up to just behind the front line, as it were. The news of the strike movement in the spring of 1912 stirred all the colony. Safarov decided to go back to St. Petersburg, full of enthusiasm, but with little that was concrete in his round head, behind his bright, intelligent eyes, beyond the youthful desire to be in the firing line.

"What are you going to begin work with when you get back ? " Lenin asked him.

Safarov at once began to explain to him his unshakable Bolshevik credo, the crying need to expose the Liquidators before the Petersburg workers.

Lenin, who knew the mind of the Putilov or Siemens worker as well as if he were sitting with him in a pub. after work, answered unexpectedly, with a sly smile :

"And a nice fool you'll make of yourself ! "

He explained to him carefully what the strike movement really meant, that thousands of workers were coming to political life for the first time, that to them the internal disputes between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were only unintelligible jargon. These workers naturally wanted unity, and in these circumstances "unity from below" must be the slogan which would gather them around the old illegal party. In practice they would soon see for themselves how impossible was unity with the Liquidators.

With the same shrewd common sense he advised the

railway-worker Badayev, one of the Bolshevik Duma Deputies, who came to him for advice on how to move an amendment to the budget :

" My dear chap, whatever do you want to bother yourself with amendments, budgets, proposals of the Cadets, for ? You are a worker. The Duma's for buffaloes. You just go and tell all over Russia about the life of the workers. Explain the horrors of capitalist slavery, call the workers to revolution, fling in the face of the Black Duma the words ' scoundrels,' ' exploiters.' You introduce such an ' amendment ' that in three years we're going to hang the lot of you, Black Hundred landlords, on lamp-posts. Now that'll be a real amendment."

He was half joking, but the intention was serious. In the Tsar's Parliament, a mere tool of the reactionary landlords, bankers, the only possible policy was defiance, a defiance which could legally be printed and circulated all over the country. It was the only platform where any kind of free speech was possible. But the Bolshevik Deputies, under Lenin's guidance, gave very serious consideration to the Budget in order to expose it as an expression of class domination, and Lenin himself prepared the Budget speech delivered by the leader of the fraction.

At the end of the year, he was writing affectionately to Stalin in St. Petersburg over the question of preparing a great demonstration on the anniversary of January 9th. " A leaflet must be ready with an appeal for meetings, a one-day strike, and demonstrations. . . . The slogans on the leaflet must be our three revolutionary ones (The Republic ; The Eight Hour Day ; and The Confiscation of the Landlords' Estates), with especial emphasis on the 300 years ' shame ' of the Romanovs' rule."

The leaflet was got out, the workers answered the Bolsheviks' call, and nearly a quarter of a million struck on January 9th, in many cases prolonging the strikes for several days in order to win economic demands. All through the year there continued similar manifestations, and it seemed that now hardly a day could pass without some incident



to prove that the move to Cracow was more than justified, that Bolshevism was winning the confidence of the overwhelming majority of Russian workers, was even penetrating the army and navy.

For Lenin himself the year was not a happy one. Krupskaya was seriously ill, and they had to make a long stay in Switzerland while she was operated upon and grew slowly back to health again during the summer. In August they returned to Galicia, but this time to the village of Poronino in the Carpathians. There was an entirely new problem filling his mind which meant much study and writing—the national problem, now becoming of first importance. Conferences on one question or another, the work of the Bolshevik Deputies, the party Press, the struggle against the Liquidators, preparations for another and greater political strike on the coming January 9th, 1914—all these and many other tasks filled his time. He wrote almost daily for *Pravda*, corresponded with the editors on the contents of the paper, which he read daily from end to end.

Life was not easy. Payment for his literary work, immense in its scope (on the agrarian question alone he wrote much more than most acknowledged authorities on the subject, nor did he confine himself to Russia. One of his most interesting works in this period is a study of the *Development of Capitalism in Agriculture* which analyses the whole position of modern American agriculture), as well as in the knowledge which informs it, was almost impossible to receive. He writes often to Gorky to try to find him a publisher, but censorship difficulties proved too great. His chief means of livelihood remained the meagre salary the party was able to pay him, which at times was far from sufficient, so that in 1913 he even considered having to give up his work in Austria, emigrate to England, and find there some means of earning a living. Krupskaya, despite bad health, had to do the whole of the housework herself, cook the dinners not only for Ilyich but for the numerous visitors, carry on all the secretarial work of the Central Committee. Her

hands, one of the Duma Deputies noticed, were those of a labourer, and he adds : " There were terrible moments. What if the party cannot find any means ? Then Ilyich will have to leave the movement, for he never gets his works into either bourgeois journals or newspapers."

This crisis passed, as did many another, but it all had its effect. Ilyich was no inhuman " man of iron," without feeling or the ordinary weaknesses of the flesh.

" I'm in trouble," he writes to Gorky. " My wife is sick with Basedov's disease. Nerves ! My nerves are also playing pranks a bit. We have gone for the summer to the village of Poronino, near Zakopanye. It's a good spot, healthy, about 700 metres high. Wouldn't you like to make a trip here ? There will be some interesting workers from Russia."

The " interesting workers " were the members of the Duma fraction, all working men, led by Roman Malinovsky, the spy. Malinovsky was a brilliant creature, whose greatest fault was his vanity. Such people in more democratic countries are lured by more subtle means into betraying their party ; dinners, judicious flattery in " high " quarters, gracious condescension from beautiful ladies, perhaps a little financial aid in the form of Stock Exchange " tips," and the red-hot revolutionary becomes a respectable Labour leader, and may even in time be a Cabinet Minister. In Russia the same type in order to " get on " had to sell himself to the police, as this Malinovsky had early done. He proved a valuable agent, till change in the direction of the secret service lost him his job and made him resign his Deputy's mandate and flee the country.

He was a temperamental, showy character, with very real abilities as an organiser and orator that quickly brought him into the leadership of the party. But there is evidence that his treachery weighed on him. He would become moody, drink heavily, complain bitterly, act in an exaggerated manner. But Ilyich trusted him. He seemed to represent something very real in the new Russian Labour movement : the revolutionary worker who was able to organise and lead—to take the place of the intellectuals

who had hitherto controlled the party. He was the founder of the metal-workers' union, in which in 1913 the Bolsheviks got a majority over the Liquidators.

The news coincided with the first anniversary of *Pravda* which somehow survived both censorship and police prosecution in an almost miraculous manner and reached a circulation of 40,000 copies. "We rejoiced here in the anniversary number, and the victory in the metal-workers' union over the Liquidators," he wrote to his sister. To Maxim Gorky, in the very same letter in which he complained of "nerves," he expressed himself even more jubilantly and triumphantly.

"Our cause is going forward in spite of everything and the Workers' Party is growing as a *revolutionary* Social Democratic Party against the Liberal renegades, the Liquidators. There will be a holiday on our street!"

The last sentence had a double meaning for every Russian. It is the joyous conclusion to Chernishevsky's *Tale of New People*, the book which Lenin knew by heart, and whose title *What is to be Done?* he had borrowed for himself. "The holiday on our street," was Chernishevsky's way of referring to the coming revolution in order to escape the censor's suppression of his book. And indeed life was not all strain and nervous worry, the writing of articles, and analysis of statistics. They anticipated the holiday that was to come (and to kill Ilyich when it did come) by making holiday themselves on the meadows and forest-clad slopes of the Carpathians.

Krupskaya, Lenin, and Inessa Armand, a Russian woman of French extraction, would walk for hours in the country outside Cracow. Lenin had a great affection for Inessa, a woman of great and warm vitality, who loved with equal passion her children, the Revolution, music and the country, and who had the rare quality of infusing others with her own love of life. She died of typhus soon after the Revolution, though not before she had worn herself out in work among the factory women of Petrograd and Moscow, in dangerous and secret work among the French army of occupation at

Odessa. The bungalow in which Lenin lived at Poronino was at the very foot of the mountains. "The air was wonderful," Krupskaya recalls, "and although there were frequent mists and drizzle the view of the mountains during the clear intervals was extremely beautiful. We would climb up to the plateau which was quite close to our bungalow and watch the snow-capped peaks of the Tatra Mountains ; they were beautiful." He bathed daily in the cold mountain streams, and in the walks over the mountains he was the leader, forcing along his weaker and usually younger companions with his merciless sarcasm.

Nineteen fourteen came. A year of trouble and difficulty from the beginning. The Mensheviks and Trotskyists were very active in the Second International, the majority of whose leaders sympathised with them against the Bolsheviks. Kautsky was now openly with them, and, though Plekhanov still waveringly and half-unwillingly supported the Bolshevik point of view, it seemed that the party was going to be forced into a unity it did not desire and could not accept with the Liquidators. A conference was fixed for August, by the Bureau of the International, to take place in Brussels. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had to accept the invitation, but they intended to accept unity only on condition that the opposition submitted themselves completely to the Bolshevik point of view which clearly had the support of the overwhelming majority of Russian workers. It never took place, and the ordeal of perhaps having to leave the International on this question was avoided by a greater ordeal which killed the International itself.

One terrible and tragic incident marked the summer—Malinovsky's open betrayal of the party. On May 7th, he walked into a meeting of the Bolshevik Duma Deputies, flung his Deputy's mandate on the table, walked out without a word of explanation, and the same night took the train to the frontier. He came to Cracow and the Central Committee appointed a commission, of which Lenin was the head, to consider the accusations that he was a police agent. The first shots in the war were already audible in

the Galician forests when the commission finished its work with the inconclusive report that the evidence was strong but insufficient, and the spy himself had disappeared.

Two people, Bukharin and Rozmirovich, were convinced of his guilt. Rozmirovich had herself been arrested the year before, and only one person could have known the facts with which the police confronted her, but that person, himself alarmed, had asked the police to release her, and she had been set free, her mind clouded with doubt and suspicion. Could it be possible? Many people disliked Malinovsky personally because of his hysterical excitement, his occasional overbearing manners, but on the other hand he was one of the most brilliant and active party members.

Lenin was attracted by his energy, his ability, and at first was inclined to believe he was destined to play a very great part. Krupskaya, on the other hand, disliked and suspected his pretentiousness and high nervous manner, but so great was the confidence he had inspired that not even his sudden resignation and the many rumours could convince the tribunal of his guilt.

Bukharin was staying at Poronino, in the little wooden cottage, during the investigation, and has left an unforgettable picture of the awful impression produced by his accusation. "I remember the horrible time when Roman Malinovsky arrived at Poronino. The first night I slept in the little room upstairs. I say 'slept,' but I slept very badly, waking every minute: after all, it was a case of the treachery of the leader of our own Duma fraction. And I can clearly hear Lenin walking about below. He is not asleep. He goes out on the verandah, brews himself some terribly strong tea (I know it, I can guess it), and walks up and down the verandah. He strides and strides up and down, stops and then starts striding again. So the night passes. In time my head is clouded in a misty dozing. But as soon as ever I start back to consciousness my ear catches the measured sounds below.

"It is morning. I go out. Ilyich is neatly dressed. There are yellow rings under his eyes. His face is that of a sick



man. But he laughs happily, his gestures are his usual ones, confident. ' Well, have you slept all right ? Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Yes, will you have tea ? Some bread ? Are we going for a stroll ? ' Just as though nothing had happened, as though there had been no tormented night, suffering, doubt, reflection, tense thought."

Lenin did not behave so calmly, as though nothing had happened, because he wanted to conceal his doubts. It was because the sleepless night of torment and doubt had brought him to a definite conclusion, that even though Malinovsky was a spy he had done as much and more harm to his masters than to those he had betrayed.

Years after, when the full story was known, he expressed this in an article, showing how the police had overreached themselves through their vulgar ignorance of their opponents. They thought they were dealing, not with a mass movement, but with a secret conspiracy, and that Malinovsky would hold for them all its threads. " But when the police achieved these aims," Lenin pointed out, " they found that Malinovsky was transformed into a link of the solid chain connecting in various ways our legal base with the two chief organs by which the party influenced the masses, namely *Pravda* and the Duma fraction. The *agent provocateur* had to protect both these organs in order to justify his vocation. . . . Malinovsky could and did ruin individuals, but he could neither hold back nor control the growth of the party nor in any way affect the increase of its importance to the masses."

Among the individuals whom he ruined were Sverdlov and Stalin, both denounced by him to the police when he was supposed to be sheltering them. Kamenev was sent from Cracow to Petersburg to replace Stalin as the secret representative of the Central Committee in charge of the Duma fraction and of *Pravda*. Malinovsky himself was caught up in the tide of war that even then was lapping against the Galician forests, made a prisoner of war in Germany, and after 1917 came home to give himself up for trial to the comrades he had betrayed.

His end was the same curious mixture as his life, half bravado, half hysteria, a wild hope that he could prove himself innocent, that he could show that he had "deceived" his paymasters, a strange exaltation that the cause he had betrayed for so many years, the cause of his own class, had triumphed. He was found guilty and shot, having stepped at last from the world of deception and half dreams into the world of reality.

## CHAPTER IV

### WAR

PROPHETS of the coming war were not lacking in any country from 1905 to 1914. Few even whose childhood was lived in this period but grew up with the conviction that they would soon be either soldiers or sailors fighting some unknown but terrible enemy. The German child who played at being a Potsdam grenadier imagined himself heroically putting to flight whole armies of Frenchmen or Russians, while the English boy launching a small boat upon a pond in his imagination saw it sail to blow the Kaiser's fleet to the bottom of the windy North Sea. Soldiers on leave wrote books in which they described in the form of a novel the coming war. Patriotic leagues toured holiday resorts in peaceful England to show lantern slides or cinematograph films of the horrors of the Balkan war. They distributed leaflets and delivered lectures showing how undefended England was against such horrors, and how her honour was being sworn away by perfidious politicians who refused to make big navies bigger and to give their country the blessings of conscription.

They even hired aeroplanes to scatter the leaflets over the crowds upon the golden beaches which in a year's time were to be covered with rusty barbed wire and cringe before concrete gun emplacements. If, to the disappointment of the martial small boys who for the moment had left their sport of building vast entrenchments against the tide that rolled inexorably in from Germany, the aeroplanes of those far-off days sometimes sputtered helplessly and refused to rise, the feeling of coming battle remained there none the less, and the small boys did not fail to collect on grubby pieces of paper the autographs of the heroic airmen.

In short, none but a fool could have denied the coming of war in those days, and if such fools were to be found, that does not warrant us in claiming any special merit for those who foresaw the truth. What is important is how much of this truth they saw, and what were their reactions to it. A Galloper Smith, an Amery, or a Carson, all armed for civil war, had one view. An Asquith or a Lloyd George had another, perhaps not very different, view. A John Burns was unable to believe his own eyes, so successfully had his friends befogged his vision for him, and the obscure Socialist at the street corner had yet another and quite different view from any one of them, though, to be sure, it was quite an unimportant view in 1914, before the guns had spoken.

And Lenin's view also, which was akin to that of the obscure Socialist, was unknown and unheeded, and if the Churchills, the Galloper Smiths, Tirpitzes, and Von Moltkes had even heard it in 1912 or 1913, they would only have shrugged their shoulders, perhaps have thought it safer to prevent it getting heard to any extent, but they would have put anyone in a lunatic asylum who had suggested that this shabby little Russian, pacing the verandah of his mountain hut in Galicia, knew more about their war than they did, and would be able to put a stop to it so successfully that they would themselves be in fear of their very lives from the soldiers they had led so triumphantly to battle.

Many people had theories as to the cause of this war that all knew to be coming. The jingoes said it was because there could not be two leaders of world civilisation, even though it meant destroying that civilisation in order to decide the question ; the Liberals declared that the Kaiser was a menace to democracy, or the British Empire a burden on progress, according to their nationality, the pacifists, and with them most Socialists, thought that the power of the armament rings and the spread of secret diplomacy was at the bottom of it all.

With these views, all in their own degree naïve and crude, Lenin's point of view had little in common. With the

last one he had some sympathy, though he disagreed with it profoundly, since he considered it made the dangerous error of mistaking the part for the whole, the symptom for the disease itself.

For years now he had been considering the new imperialist development of capitalism, the growth of great trusts and monopolies, the power of the banks, the gradual dividing up by the Great Powers of the whole surface of the earth. Capitalism, with its enormous technical progress, its Taylor system of eliminating waste in the factories, its high organisation, seemed to most people to be changing its very nature. Certainly, Lenin decided, it is changing, but not its nature. The changes, despite the apparent progress, are those of decay. Capitalism is reaching the epoch of its own collapse, a collapse which will occupy a whole period of history, of great wars and revolutionary outbreaks. Its peaceful progress ended in 1905.

He saw in the growth of trusts and monopolies, not a new and higher form of organisation of capitalism, but an increase in its rivalries and contradictions. The monopolistic State spelt the end of capitalism's own gift of progress, of democracy, the growth of the open dictatorship of the handful of bankers, industrialists, and landlords, the enslavement of the masses. It meant that the spread of capitalism to the feudal East would awaken new millions to life and struggle, that the growth of international robbery and violence would make the national question, unsolved by capitalism through the cowardice of the Liberal bourgeoisie in its progressive period, a revolutionary thorn in the heel of the giant of imperialism. His study of economic fact led him to believe that monopoly meant an unheard-of increase in the cost of living, therefore of poverty and suffering for the masses, of sharpened economic struggle which would even affect the comfortably minded workers of such bourgeois countries as England.

In dozens of fascinating articles, in which he studies political events in England, Germany, the United States, and France, he points out the decay of the traditional



political parties of the ruling classes, the growth of the bureaucratic, military, and violent elements in the "democratic" State, the development of a political crisis as well as an economic crisis—the Ulster affair, Roosevelt's attempt to split the Democrats, the crisis in German politics, the new developments of French Radicalism that ended in the election of Poincaré as President of the Republic. "Frantic armaments and the policy of imperialism are making out of contemporary Europe a kind of 'social peace' which is more like a barrel of gunpowder," is his conclusion.

A little group of imperialist Powers ruled the world, but those Powers were neither equal, nor able to develop equally in an economic and therefore political sense. This unevenness of development caused a division of the world that no longer corresponded to their real strength, and for this reason they must fight for a re-division, use force as the last argument of the dissatisfied robber. This was Lenin's view of the origin of the war, which differed from that of most other Socialists as much as his views on how to fight against war.

He was certain that war must bring revolution, but he loathed war and the war-makers with all his heart. Gorky tells of an interesting conversation in Paris in 1908, at the time of the Bosnia-Herzegovina affair, and of the first attempts of Britain and Russia to divide up Persia in the interest of civilisation.

"He brought forward a series of arguments for the imminence of war, and 'probably not of one, but of a whole series of wars'; a *prophecy which was speedily fulfilled in the Balkans*. He got up and with characteristic gesture, putting his thumbs in his waistcoat armholes, pacing slowly up and down the little room, screwing up his bright eyes, said: 'War is coming. It is inevitable. The capitalist world has reached the stage of putrescent fermentation. People are already beginning to poison themselves with the drugs of Chauvinism and nationalism. I think we shall yet see a general European war.'

“ ‘The proletariat? The proletariat will hardly be able to find in itself the strength to avert the carnage. How could it be done? A general strike of workers all over Europe? They are not yet sufficiently organised or class-conscious for that. Such a strike would be the signal for a civil war, but we as practical politicians cannot count on that.’

“ He paused, scraping the soles of his shoes on the floor, then said gloomily: ‘The proletariat of course will suffer terribly. Such must be its fate for some time yet. But its enemies will weaken each other; that also is inevitable.’

“ Coming up to me, he said forcibly but not loudly, as if in amazement: ‘No, but think of it. Why should people who are well fed force hungry ones to fight against each other? Could you name a more idiotic or revolting crime? The workers will pay a dreadfully heavy price for this, but in the end they will gain. It is the will of history.’ ”

In 1912 war again threatened, and he wrote to his sister and mother in Russia that if war drove them out—and clearly a European war would strike at Galicia in the first place—then they would go to Vienna or Stockholm, but this time Ilyich did “not very much believe in war,” and his judgment proved correct, for the danger passed.

August 1914 found them in Poronino, preparing for the meeting of the Second International on the Russian question, for the Congress of the International then due to take place, and for the congress of their own party which was to precede both. None of them took place. On August 7th a gendarme, accompanied by a bewildered peasant with a rifle, appeared and searched the cottage. The gendarme told Ilyich that the next morning he must arrest him on suspicion of being a Russian spy and send him to Novy Targ, the nearest town. For twelve days the victim of war fever, accused for the first and last time of serving the Emperor of All the Russias, sat in the country gaol, while his friends interceded for him. Krupskaya saw him each day and told him the news of the war, and it was in this prison cell that he heard of the greatest act of treachery in history—the betrayal by the leaders of Labour in Germany, England, Austria, and

France of the opposition to war which they had so solemnly pledged at Basle only two years before.

Part of the time he spent helping his fellow prisoners, mostly local peasants, with legal advice ; part of the time he spent deep in thought about the calamity that raged outside. In a few days the Austrian Socialist, Victor Adler, had convinced the chief of police in Vienna that the Tsar had no worse enemy than Lenin, and he was released. They went to Cracow, and the house where they lodged was already being turned into a military hospital. Krupskaya describes the sight they witnessed from their window as they woke next morning.

“ A train had arrived from Krasnik, bringing dead and wounded soldiers. Relatives of the men who had taken part in the battle ran after the stretcher-bearers and looked into the faces of the dead and dying, afraid to recognise their kin. Those who had been less seriously wounded came slowly from the railway station, with bandaged heads and arms. People who met the train helped them carry their luggage, offered them food and jugs of beer obtained from near-by restaurants. One could not help thinking : ‘ This, then, is war ! ’ Yet it was only the first battle.”

Lenin’s mind was already made up. He was not one of those Socialists who deceived themselves by saying, “ We can go to this war singing the ‘ International,’ ” because for the German it was against the Tsar or for the Frenchman against the Kaiser. The Second International had collapsed in shame, its leaders were already intriguing for places in the war Governments, but there were fragments of an opposition in every country. They must be welded into a new, revolutionary International ; the war must end in a Socialist revolution. To work for such ends in any of the belligerent countries was impossible, so they took train by slow war-time stages to the Swiss frontier, shunted aside at every big station while the military trains, with their loads of cheering peasant lads, passed through to the front.

Krupskaya’s mother had received a small inheritance—about £500 in all—half of which the broker in Vienna took

for transferring the money from Cracow to Berne in war-time. On this small sum they lived now with difficulty till the revolution. In July 1917 the police of Kerensky found a few pounds of it left in Lenin's rooms in Petrograd, and this was used as conclusive proof that he was in the Kaiser's pay as a German spy. It really proved that the leader of the first workers' revolution did not wish nor understand how to live any differently from the ordinary workman.

Life in neutral Switzerland was not to prove easy. In reality there were no neutral countries in the war ; the Governments of those small States outside the firing-line were exposed to all kinds of pressure from the belligerents, pressure to which they sometimes acceded only too willingly. Lenin had to impress upon his comrades that their work must be carried on with the utmost secrecy, that between the Tsar's Government and the Swiss Republic there might easily be an " understanding " which would result in their arrest and expulsion. In Russia the party had suffered severe blows. The Duma Deputies and Kamenev were arrested and sentenced to penal servitude ; *Pravda* had to close down ; raids, arrests, and courts martial were the order of the day. For a long time communication proved difficult and dangerous.

Abroad, the situation was not so serious. Litvinov in London, Shlyapnikov in Stockholm, Kollontai in Christiania, and eventually Bukharin in New York gave the party useful links with the remnants of the world Socialist movement. Lenin's one aim now was to re-establish that movement, to convince the little groups of left Socialists who continued some kind of opposition to the war that only a fight to transform it into a civil war for the revolutionary establishment of Socialism could now hope to succeed.

The movement was hopelessly divided by the shock of war. Trotsky and a small centre group were agitating for peace, and peace was the slogan of the Independent Labour Party in England and of the followers of Kautsky in Germany. A few Dutch, Swiss, German, and Scandinavian Socialists, the Serbian and Bulgarian parties, a section of

the Italians, vaguely sympathised with Lenin's point of view, without really understanding it, while they took heart to resist the war from the heroic example of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in Germany.

Trotsky and other waverers failed to understand the "sudden" betrayal of Socialism by its leaders. Patiently Lenin pointed out that here was nothing sudden; that it was the consequence of the whole line of development before the war, "a whole opportunist *line of policy* based on a definite social stratum inside of modern democracy, bound to the bourgeoisie of its own national 'colour' by numerous threads of common economic, social, and political interests, a line directly, openly, consciously, and systematically hostile to any idea of a 'disruption of gradualness.'" Socialist jingoism, so surprising to the naïve, was born "suddenly," "in the same fashion as a child is born 'at once' only if nine months have elapsed after its conception."

Lenin's own indignation at the betrayal of the leaders of the International knew no bounds; particularly was he enraged against the leaders of the German party and Kautsky, their famous prophet. German Social Democracy, founded by Marx and Engels, had immense authority in the eyes of the whole world, and its full-throated support for the Kaiser had done more than anything else to prevent any real opposition to the war. For Kautsky, Lenin can find no words strong enough to express his disgust.

"Kautsky is more hypocritical, disgusting, and harmful than anyone else," he writes to Shlyapnikov in October. "His internationalism consists, if you please, in the workers of one country shooting the workers of another under the pretence of 'defence of the fatherland.'" He already sees the leadership of the world Socialist movement passing from Germany to Russia, and closes prophetically: "The workers of Petersburg have the best sort of sentiment—hatred towards the traitors of German Social Democracy. With all our strength we must support and reinforce that sentiment and the consciousness of firm decision to fight international opportunism. German Social Democracy was



the authority up to now—to-day *it is the example of what not to do!*”

He writes to his comrades everywhere to get in touch with the Socialist opposition, even though they are “naïve, sentimental anti-militarists,” and tell them there is no alternative; either they must now accept the slogan of civil war or remain with the opportunists and jingoes. He had no illusions that they could put this slogan into practice in the near future, but it was their duty, the duty of every real Socialist, to make it the line of their work.

“No one can guarantee,” he writes to Shlyapnikov again, “when and to what extent this gospel will be justified in a practical way. That’s not the question (only vile sophists renounce revolutionary agitation because they don’t know when the revolution will be). It’s a matter of working along that *line*. *Only* this work is Socialist and not jingo. *It alone* will bring Socialist fruit, revolutionary fruit.”

A good many simple people retained the illusion that argument was still possible in war-time, that an appeal to reason and humanity might stop the slaughter. Lenin was not deceived, but he knew that the Governments were perfectly capable of using this humane sentiment for peace as a means for deceiving the people and keeping them from any real struggle against war. He deals with this peace propaganda in one of the most interesting of all his letters, written again to Shlyapnikov and dated November 14th, 1914: “About the slogan of ‘peace.’ You are mistaken if you think the bourgeoisie won’t hear of it. Only to-day I was reading the English *Economist*. The *clever* bourgeois of this advanced country . . . are *for* peace (of course for the sake of strengthening capitalism). We mustn’t let ourselves be mixed up with petty bourgeois, sentimental Liberals, etc. The era of the *bayonet* has come. That is a fact—and it means we must fight with *the same weapon*.”

The postscript is even more interesting. He points out that “peace” is the best guarantee of “social peace,” the subordination of the workers and the continuance of capitalism, and that in addition: “(1) *All* the jingoes are also for

peace (only on *what kind of conditions*)—but they don't *allow* anything about our conditions to appear in their censored Press !! (2) The German and Russian Courts are also (secretly to-day, half-openly to-morrow) for a special peace with one another. (3) All the sentimental bourgeois and time-servers are 'for peace' only for an anti-revolutionary, Philistine, slave peace."

Lenin was against the slogan of peace because he knew it did not mean peace, because any peace between the Powers who made the war would only contain the seeds of fresh wars. Nicholas and Wilhelm were ready at any moment, he quite correctly guessed, to come to an arrangement, at the expense of their allies, to save their own thrones and strengthen their empires. Only his own revolutionary conclusion to the war would guarantee the world against its repetition, and if the time of the bayonet had come he neither sought it nor liked it, but he recognised the fact and drew the necessary conclusion.

Indeed, all his companions at this time agree that for Lenin the war was a terrible blow, that the memory of the wounded dragging through the streets of Cracow from the battle of Krasnik, remained to haunt him, so that he seemed to feel every shot. Yet it was certainly not because he was afraid of bullets himself, or shuddered at the thought of blood, like some sentimental pacifist. Afraid he was, but not of death. He was afraid that the workers, deserted by their leaders, herded to the slaughter, might not find the strength to make use of the great opportunity of using their rifles to a better purpose than the extermination of one another.

He changed at this time. Into his letters there comes a bitterness and hatred that were not there before, though no one, of course, could ever have accused him of amiability towards the rulers of the world and their lackeys. But he can write now phrases like "I loathe and despise Kautsky . . . a filthy, rotten, and self-satisfied hypocrite." Anatole France made his last public speech during the occupation of the Ruhr. With a similar emphasis of loathing and disgust he referred to "*cette bourgeoisie, cruelle, stupide, avare.*"

Lenin felt like this towards Kautsky and the other Socialists who supported the war, because he saw in them the worst qualities of the class they had chosen to defend. All his hatred for the people who caused the war found expression in the almost personal violence he felt towards Kautsky.

The hatred was all the greater because the blows fell so fast one upon the other. When he first saw *Vorwärts*, the official paper of the German Socialists, with its declaration that the Reichstag Socialist Deputies had voted the war credits, he would not believe his own eyes, and thought the paper was forged by the Imperial General Staff. Then came the news that the veteran Plekhanov had spoken in Paris at a meeting of exiles with an appeal for them to join the French army. "Can Plekhanov also have turned traitor?" he asked several times, unwilling to believe, and then, when he was convinced, he would not rest until he had run Plekhanov to earth in Switzerland and denounced him to his face before a stormy public meeting. He refused for the first time in his life to offer him his hand or call him comrade.

He became more gloomy after this, a gloom that was not relieved when the war-time rise in the cost of living threatened to swallow the whole of his little capital. He was less tolerant also, his sarcasm became more merciless and his very physical appearance changed, for he became thinner and his features stood out more sharply. Perhaps he felt that after the collapse of official Socialism it was even more necessary that the rearguard of the revolution should be disciplined and united. He was soon in controversy with Rosa Luxemburg, bravely but confusedly trying to rally her forces in Germany; with Radek, Bukharin, and others. The war had driven them to the extreme of "leftism," and these good internationalists were calling for world revolution and Socialism at once, forgetting the tangle of national rivalries, the hard struggle that must face the workers when they seize power. Lenin saw only too clearly, from the example of the Irish revolt of Easter, 1916, that there would be no chance for Socialism till national aspirations were satisfied in the most democratic manner.

He set himself to sum up the results of his years of reading and thinking on the development of modern capitalism, and in 1915 wrote his book *Imperialism*. His analysis of capitalism, particularly of the causes of the war, convinced him that those who thought that Socialism must come all at once, the world over, were hopelessly mistaken. World imperialism was too complicated, too uneven, for such simple solutions. No, the revolution and Socialism might well come first in one of the weaker imperialist Powers, unable to stand the strain of the war ; in Russia most likely of all ; and in an article directed particularly against Trotsky he once again emphasises this point of view.

In the summer of 1915, when the first fury of the combatants was fading into dull and bitter grappling in trench-lines, that now spread across whole countries, when the first illusions of patriotic glory were fading, the Labour movement began to re-gather its strength and contacts were made again. First a Women's Conference, then a Youth Conference, took place in Switzerland, and, though the delegates were far from revolutionary, Socialists of all countries met once again and the Bolsheviks began to find sympathisers. The Swiss Socialists decided to call an international conference of Socialists opposed to the war, and Lenin flung himself heart and soul into the task of getting a real revolutionary left representation.

The conference, historic though it was to become, met in complete obscurity in the little town of Zimmerwald in September. Lenin had worked hard through the summer to prepare the conference. Together with Zinoviev he wrote a pamphlet, *Socialism and War*, which was a kind of manifesto of the Bolshevik viewpoint. He succeeded in having it translated into French and German, and tried persistently, though unsuccessfully, to have an English translation published in the United States. Only nine of those present adopted Lenin's platform, but they represented the German, Swedish, Norwegian, Latvian, and Swiss minorities. Afterwards they were joined by the Dutch left wing Socialists. The point of view of the majority, among whom was

Trotsky, was vaguely militant, and appealed to the workers to enter a struggle for peace which should be a struggle for the brotherhood of nations and Socialism.

The Bolsheviks and their sympathisers signed the manifesto, which, for all its faults, they considered a step forward, and they took the opportunity of the conference to form their own international committee, the nucleus of the Third International that was to be born out of the Russian Revolution.

The beginning was a small one, achieved only with intense effort and pains, and it seemed ridiculous to think of that obscure little group of a dozen or so revolutionaries expecting to prevail against the hurricane that raged over Europe. They had raised the red flag of revolution in the Swiss Alps, and it flew certainly *against the wind*, bravely but unseen. The nations continued the slaughter, and the East as well as the West (unluckily for the West, as it turned out) was now drawn into the struggle ; the fields of Flanders, Ypres, Loos, Neuve Chapelle, took on their inhuman, blood-and-mud, obstinately murderous aspect. In every country the most absolute dictatorship reigned ; no Socialist Press that agitated against the war could appear legally. Liebknecht and Luxemburg in Germany, John MacLean in Scotland, the Bolshevik Duma Deputies in Russia, were in prison ; even strikes were illegal.

No, it was all too slow, too difficult. Ilyich, Krupskaya writes, came back from Zimmerwald in a state of nervous exhaustion and irritation. " The day after Ilyich's arrival from Zimmerwald we climbed the Rothorn. We climbed with a grand eagerness, but, when we reached the summit, Ilyich suddenly lay down on the ground, in an uncomfortable position, almost on the snow, and fell asleep. Clouds gathered, then broke ; the view of the Alps from the Rothorn was splendid, and Ilyich slept like the dead. He never stirred, and slept over an hour. Apparently Zimmerwald had frayed his nerves a good deal and had taken much strength out of him. . . . In the autumn of 1915 we sat in the libraries more diligently than ever, we took



walks as usual, but all this could not remove the feeling of being cooped up in this democratic cage. Somewhere beyond, a revolutionary struggle was mounting, life was astir, but it was all so far away."

The memory of the oppressive summer night by the Volga, when he had read Chekhov's *Ward No. 6* and rushed out of the house, unable to bear the awful impression of imprisonment, must have been with him very often. He flung himself into his work with greater energy, writing his book on *Imperialism*, his articles for the party Press, determined to lay bare the causes of the war, to make clear the path of the revolution which he now felt that nothing could stop from breaking out all over Europe.

In February of 1916 they moved to Zürich. Funds were very low, and they dined now every day at a house kept by an Austrian woman in the workers' quarters, where a thief and a prostitute were among the regular clientele. Ilyich found them very simple and human folk, and felt happier there than in the Philistine cafés where the bank clerks and employees of the Swiss city took their *déjeuner*. They lodged in the flat of a shoemaker near by, where the other lodgers were all poor people of different nationalities, all opposed to the war and to the capitalist Governments who made it. The spring was full with the preparations for another conference—this time, because the first beginnings of discontent had alarmed the Governments, to be held secretly, in a remote mountain village, where no prying intelligence service agents could escape observation.

The conference opened at Kienthal in April. This time the lefts were in the ascendant and the Bolsheviks were their recognised leaders. They now had the support of French, Italian, and German Socialists, the knowledge that in England, France, and Germany there had been great strikes of miners and munition-workers, that the first signs of unrest had appeared in the armies. Lenin's impatience with the waverers was unconcealed. When they spoke, he smiled contemptuously, sat aside in a corner and buried himself in Aristotle or a history of philosophy, for he

was once more thinking of writing a book on philosophy. When a left-wing delegate spoke, his whole attitude changed ; he listened attentively to every word, smiled approvingly, and took copious notes.

The manifesto which was issued spoke directly of revolution as the way by which the war must be ended, while the Bolshevik proposals to the conference insisted on the practical measures which must be taken, the publication of illegal papers, propaganda among the soldiers, the organisation of strikes and demonstrations. The committee that had called the two conferences remained in being, but it was now so sharply divided that only a miracle could hold it together, even if it were desirable to hold it together. Actually Lenin felt that it had served its real purpose, that the next step would be a revolutionary one, and that a new International of revolutionary Socialists would be the result. Yet the speed with which events now moved surprised even Lenin.

His mind was full of the coming revolution and its problems. He wrote sharply against Bukharin, Piatakov, and Radek, who tried to simplify those problems in a crude, semi-anarchist fashion. Socialism, forsooth, would flower at once as a new and higher society, beyond all problems of democracy, self-determination, and so on. Lenin flayed them mercilessly. Precisely, Socialism would establish democracy, full, real, and complete for the first time. Capitalism had created democracy as an ideal which it was incapable of fulfilling, and, indeed, as it decayed capitalism became more and more anti-democratic. "The proletariat cannot become victor save through democracy, i.e. through introducing complete democracy and through combining with every step of its movement democratic demands formulated most vigorously, most decisively." He was already thinking concretely and clear on the question of what the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workers' State, should be, collecting material, re-reading the classics of Marxism.

The war was rolling on, obliterating one by one the last

remnants of the civilisation for which it was allegedly being fought. Along the once green banks of the Somme, in the Carpathian forests, even in the Italian Alps, the armies were fighting on a scale never before known in history, and the words "defeat" and "victory" had already lost their meaning. In this strange mass-murder, victory spelled defeat and defeat victory. So it was on the Somme, on the summer seas about the Skagerack and Jutland. Already the victims were stirring restlessly, wondering and asking. Two German officers and more than a score of soldiers were shot for distributing the Kienthal manifesto. The soldiers of a Russian infantry regiment demonstrated against the war, together with the workers of an automobile factory. Strikes became more common ; the discredit of the patriotic Socialists among the workers was growing. Yet it is doubtful if the intelligence service of any of the warring Governments took much notice of the conference which had just concluded at Kienthal. They filed it away and turned to more serious affairs of espionage and treachery.

The little Russian, more like a shabby clerk or an out-of-work journalist than a dangerous revolutionary, who spent all his time in the libraries at Berne and Zürich, could only be a matter for contemptuous laughter to these officers and gentlemen who had pried open the private correspondence of the world and from whom no secrets were hidden. They even understood the psychology of the people they spied upon, for in all countries they employed watchdogs of culture, the leading professors, novelists, and poets, who sought more exciting occupations than the bloody fire step afforded, to help them in their terribly secret and impressive work.

And about the middle of 1916, just after the Kienthal meeting had closed, the intelligence gentlemen, with their nervous apparatus of men of culture and letters, began to sense that in Russia all was not going smoothly. The bureaucratic-military machine of the Tsar was beginning to show signs of wear ; rumours of treachery in the Court itself spread freely. A mission was sent out post-haste from

England, but a chance mine destroyed it in a raging storm. Later in the year another one followed, and, after seeing members of all political parties but one, speaking with representatives of all classes but one, it came home and reported reassuringly. The Tsar would weather the storm. To be sure, he had a hankering after Cousin Willy, but the Allies could pay well enough to overcome that.

The little man in the library at Berne, who probably had not even achieved the honour of a file number in the exhaustive card index of the British Intelligence Service, went grimly on with his reading. He knew something about this war. In the intervals of reading he and his wife were busy with an extensive correspondence. They had news from Russia also. Their intelligence service had no funds, no poets, professors, or novelists at its command, but it was extraordinarily far-reaching, with sensitive fingers in England, France, Austria, and Germany. And by the end of that year all the reports said the same thing—the masses were weary to death of the war. The soldiers were held together by discipline but by nothing more. The signs were pointing to one thing, the underground leaflets and cyclo-styled papers spoke only one word : Revolution.





## Part IV

# REVOLUTION

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### CHAPTER I

## SPRING IN PETROGRAD

A RAGING storm in the North Sea, a drifting mine, and the cruiser *Hampshire*, together with Kitchener and his staff, disappeared for ever in a few hopeless seconds. The Tsar's wife, the Empress Alexandra Fedorovna, seated at her writing-table in Petrograd amid the calming influence of the photographs of her innumerable royal relatives in Germany and England, of the benign holy images that abounded in the corner opposite the door, wrote as follows of the disaster to her husband at the front: "In our Friend's opinion it is a good thing for us that Kitchener has perished, since later he might harm Russia, and neither is there any misfortune in the fact that his papers have perished with him. You know, England always terrifies Him, what she will be at the end of the war, when the peace negotiations begin."

The "Friend" who thus, along with the deity, was promoted to capitals, was Rasputin. It would be foolish to attribute any particular treachery to the monk, who was most certainly not a German spy, and in any case incapable of having worked out for himself the line of policy he consistently advocated at Court. Rasputin was merely the agent of very influential sections of the Russian bankers and landlord nobility, who felt that there was greater security for their possessions and more possibility of expansion for Russia in alliance with German autocracy

than with the "dangerous" democracies of the West. One of the Empress's ladies-in-waiting was the medium through which the Central Powers made constant proposals for negotiations to the Russians. She somehow passed unharmed through the lines when the peasants from Tula, Pensa, and Orel were fighting to the death with the workmen and farm hands of Saxony, Pomerania, and Prussia. The soldiers at the front ran the risk of being shot for malingering if they fell sick, but for "reasons of health" high personages of the Court frequently went abroad to take the waters, and carried with them secret correspondence from the Empress to her German relatives.

It was not, however, till the beginning of 1917 that the Russian Government began separate negotiations for peace. But on February 10th the British Minister at Copenhagen wrote in disquiet to the Foreign Office that he had definite news of conversations having begun between Russian and German officials, while Count Czernin, the Austrian Foreign Minister, a few days later received a definite proposal from Russia for the commencement of negotiations.

In high Russian circles there was grave discontent. The bourgeoisie, many of the nobles, and with them the grand dukes of the Romanov family, were in constant touch with the Allied ambassadors, and ready to take the most desperate steps to prevent a separate peace and postpone the revolution which they felt must otherwise come. But the Tsar also feared revolution, and felt that he would be safer if he made peace with Cousin Willy and recalled his armies from the front. A little group of scared and drunken noblemen and politicians murdered Rasputin in circumstances of such revealing sadism that almost anyone in possession of the most ordinary common sense must have understood that the "patriots" who were for the Allies differed in degeneracy only in degree from the "patriots" who favoured Germany.

Yet this same combination of princes, grand dukes, industrialists, and politicians now determined on a palace

revolution and a constitutional monarchy. Having got rid of Rasputin, they would get rid of the Empress. Unfortunately, it was not so easy to change the power in the country without the masses. Before the war it might have been done, and the army and police between them have suppressed any awkward movements of the revolutionary workers. Certainly the grand dukes and the Duma politicians hoped that this would be possible now, but a few short days were to show them that power was no longer theirs, that workers, students, peasants, and army were united against both sections of the Russian ruling class. October 1916 had seen a great strike movement in Petrograd. January 9th, that ill-omened anniversary for Nicholas II, saw the workers leaving the factories once again, but in tens of thousands where formerly they had been thousands only, and not only in Petrograd but in Moscow, Kharkov, Novocherkask, Tula. In Moscow the red flag was unfurled in the very centre of the town, and the demonstrators called out "Down with the war!"

At the front and in the garrisons the soldiers were also saying "Down with the war!" Incompetence, ill-luck, downright treachery, had sacrificed the lives and health of hundreds of thousands of peasants dressed in the grey military greatcoat of the Tsar, the traditional *shinel*. The mobilised peasant knew that his wife and children were struggling day and night to keep his farm from falling to pieces, while the landlord, who was maybe his own general in snug staff quarters, had the services of as many sturdy German and Austrian prisoners as he wished to till his land. In the towns there was intense scarcity. Long queues of women would gather in the early hours of the winter mornings before the bread shops, only perhaps to wait in vain, since often the shops never opened. The cost of living soared day by day and the wages of the men in the factories lagged all the time drearily behind.

The demonstrations and strikes which began again on February 23rd were determined in their character, universal and menacing, to the Tsar and the "palace

revolutionaries" alike. In five days the Tsar, his Court, the grand dukes, the generals, had all been swept away. The general in command of the picked troops who were to suppress the rising found himself sitting alone in the Admiralty surrounded by machine guns, rifles, and hand-grenades which his men had left as, one by one, or in little groups, they silently drifted away.

On the morning of February 28th the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks issued its manifesto to the country calling for a people's peace against the exploiters in all countries and ending : " All into the struggle ! The red flag of revolt is rising over all Russia. Long live the democratic republic ! Long live the revolutionary working class ! Long live the revolutionary people and the army in revolt ! " A few days before, the Empress had written to Nicholas that it was all a trifle, hooliganism of a few boys and girls who had nothing better to do but run up and down the streets and shout. On the whole she thought the bad weather as much to blame as anything else.

The news of the bad weather in Russia was slow in crossing the frontiers, in breaking through the trench lines and the censorship, and in Switzerland the news of the revolution came as a surprise to the exiles. On January 22nd, Lenin lectured to the Swiss young Socialists on the 1905 revolution. He spoke of the new revolution that was surely coming, of how it would differ from 1905, but he concluded sadly, on a note of doubt, " We of the older generation may not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution." The little group of internationalists who had met at Zimmerwald and Kienthal seemed so small, the power of the general staffs so strong, the Kaiser's Socialists, King George's Socialists, so unshaken in their grip on the working class, and he never had the illusion that revolution would come until that grip began to break.

At the beginning of February he was still filling his note-book with quotations from Marx and Engels on the question of the State, with little thought that in a few days that note-book would have to be thrown aside, or of in

what dramatic circumstances it would be taken up again. The exact day in March when the news came through we do not know (probably it was March 15th), but Krupskaya has told vividly *how* it came.

"Once, after dinner, when Ilyich was getting ready to leave for the library, and I had finished with the dishes, Bronsky ran in with the announcement, 'Haven't you heard the news? There is a revolution in Russia!'—and told us what was written in the special editions of the newspapers that were issued. When Bronsky left, we went to the lake, where on the shore all the newspapers were hung up as soon as they came out. We read the telegrams over several times. There really was a revolution in Russia. Ilyich's mind worked intensely. I do not remember how the rest of the day and evening passed."

No more libraries! The little man in the shabby suit would not be seen again in the British Museum, Bibliothèque Nationale, Royal Library at Stockholm, Société de Lecture at Geneva, Public Library at Zürich. The revolution had come to stay this time. He waited in an agony of impatience for the next morning's telegrams, and, when he had read them, sat down to dash off his first impressions in a letter to Alexandra Kollontai in Stockholm.

"We have just received the second series of Government telegrams concerning the revolution of March 14th in Petrograd. The workers have been fighting in bloody battles for a week, yet Miliukov plus Guchkov plus Kerensky are in power! The same 'old' European pattern. . . . Well, what of it? This 'first stage of the first revolution' bred by the war will be neither final nor confined to Russia. . . . *Never again* along the lines of the Second International! *Never again* with Kautsky! . . . Republican propaganda; war against imperialism; revolutionary propaganda as heretofore, agitation, and struggle for an *international* proletarian revolution and for the conquest of power by the 'Soviets of Workers' Deputies.' . . . After the 'great rebellion' of 1905, the 'glorious revolution' of 1917!"

Feverish activity every moment now. Lenin foresaw the



danger that in the enthusiasm engendered by the overthrow of the Tsar there would be much talk of unity of the workers' parties. He wrote again to Kollontai the next day : " In my opinion, our main task is to guard against getting entangled in foolish attempts at ' unity ' with the social patriots (or, which is still more dangerous, with the wavering ones, like the Organisation Committee, Trotsky and Co.) and to continue the work of *our own* party in a consistently *internationalist* spirit. Our immediate task is to widen the scope of our work, to organise the masses, to arouse new social strata, the backward elements, the rural population, the domestic servants, to form cells in the army for the purpose of carrying on a systematic and detailed exposure of the new Government, to prepare the seizure of power by the *Soviets of Workers' Deputies*. Only this power can give bread, *peace*, and freedom. Right now complete the rout of reaction and refuse *all* confidence or support to the new Government. . . . Keep armed watchfulness ; armed preparation of a broader base for a *higher* stage."

The style is telegraphic, as a general snaps down instructions on a field pad in the heat of battle, and there is a breathless postscript alive with the fiery energy of the prisoner of Swiss democracy who at last sees freedom breaking : " I am afraid that the epidemic of ' sheer ' enthusiasm may now spread in Petrograd, without a systematic effort towards the creation of a party of a *new* type, which must *by no means* resemble those of the Second International. Spread out ! Arouse new strata ! Awaken new initiative, form new organisations in every layer, and *prove* to them that *peace* can come only with the armed Soviets of Workers' Deputies in power."

Lenin had no intention of seeing Russia the victim of a " glorious revolution," some smug, respectable William and Mary taking on the official representation of Anglo-French interests. He drew his inspiration from the " great rebellions " of history ; he was the Cromwell of his people and of the class to whose interests he devoted himself, and the burning words of the postscript give the key to his policy.

This was the way to prevent new and more glittering chains of "democratic" slavery being forged for the people, by rousing and organising the initiative and will for life of nameless millions, a task which could only be performed by a party that had broken for ever with all traditions of parliamentary compromise and democratic play-acting, a party that was democratic in a sense only hinted at by history hitherto, a democracy of Cromwell's Ironsides, of the Jacobins, but broader, deeper, uniting all poor and oppressed people. That is what he had striven for in all these years of prison and obscure exile, or ceaseless polemic and untiring labour to master the facts of modern life.

History had given the opportunity, as he had always known it must, yet he seemed as far away as ever from being able to take advantage of it. No hope that the "democratic" Government of Miliukov and Kerensky, the play-thing of Sir George Buchanan and Monsieur Maurice Paléologue, would magically open the fronts to let him pass. Everywhere the little Swiss Republic was surrounded by trench-lines, by rings of armed and watchful men, while in all the warring countries there was only one fate for men like himself—immediate arrest and an escort to the high wire fence of a concentration camp. Switzerland was more than ever a democratic prison.

Plekhanov and his friends, ardent supporters of the Allies, would get every assistance to return, perhaps become Ministers of the new Government. For the Internationalists no such fate. But the armies of the whole world should not keep him away from Russia now. The tireless mind, the immense energy, that already began to feel itself fortified by the new will to life of millions, would solve that problem also.

The first efforts were like the wild beating of a prisoner on the bars of his cell. On the 19th he writes to Karpinsky in Geneva telling him to take papers for a journey through France and England in his own name, so that Lenin might use them to go by this route to Russia. "I can put on a wig," he adds pathetically. Indeed, he could be

photographed in the wig and appear at the Allied consulates in Berne with Karpinsky's papers, and already wearing a wig. "What a torture it is for us all to be sitting here at such a time," he wrote to a friend in Stockholm, and even wilder ideas of escape were feverishly put forward.

That very day a meeting of Russian *émigrés* was taking place in Geneva, where Martov put forward a plan which in the end was to prove the one that was adopted, after endless trials and many modifications—that the Russians should go back through Germany in exchange for a number of interned Germans. Karpinsky wrote at once to tell Lenin of the plan, but he spent a sleepless night turning over means of escape, each madder than the other, before he got the letter. Krupskaya still remembers that unnatural mental fever, so unlike his usual calm, realistic reasoning.

"From the moment the news of the revolution came, Ilyich did not sleep, and at night all sorts of incredible plans were made. We could travel by aeroplane. But such things could be thought of only in the semi-delirium of the night. One had only to formulate it vocally to realise the utter impracticability of such a plan. A passport of a foreigner from a neutral country would have to be obtained. A Swedish passport would be best, as a Swede arouses less suspicion. A Swedish passport could have been obtained through the aid of the Swedish comrades, but there was the further difficulty of our not knowing the Swedish language. Perhaps only a little Swedish would do. But it would be so easy to give oneself away. 'You will fall asleep and see Mensheviks in your dreams and you will start swearing, and shout, Scoundrels, scoundrels! and give the whole conspiracy away,' I said to him teasingly."

Nevertheless, in the morning he actually wrote to Ganetsky in Stockholm, enclosing photographs of himself and Zinoviev, with the request that he should find two Swedes like them, only they must be deaf and dumb! Ganetsky laughed at the naïvety, but he felt the mental torture that could give birth to such fantastic plans.

When Ilyich got the letter with Martov's proposal he accepted it eagerly, got together all those Swiss Socialists who might be of use—Robert Grimm, Fritz Platten—and urged them on to negotiate with the Swiss Government and German Ambassador. Ironically enough, Martov and the other left Mensheviks were frightened by the very daring of their own idea and hastily withdrew, so that it was left to Lenin to go on alone.

While the complicated negotiations went on, he wrote his "Letters from Afar" for the *Pravda*, whose first number had reappeared. The first one contains again the idea he had put into his article on the fall of Port Arthur, when the revolution of 1905, the "great rebellion," was about to begin—that war is a great accelerator of history, that it must in modern conditions bring revolution with it. The events of March in Petrograd were the beginning of the end of the imperialist war, of its transformation into civil war against capitalism. Then comes one of those phrases which abound in his writings, phrases which sum up with concentrated emotion all the intense analysis of the forces of life which is the mark of his work. "One bloody lump, that is the socio-political life of the historic period through which we are now passing."

No despair is in that phrase, because he knew already that the process of breaking away from the bloody lump was beginning. For, "'he who laughs last laughs longest.' The bourgeoisie was not able to delay for very long the coming of the revolutionary crisis produced by the war. This crisis is growing with irresistible force in all countries, beginning with Germany, where, according to a recent observer who visited that country, there is 'hunger organised with the ability of genius,' and down to England and France, where hunger is also looming, though it is not so wonderfully organised." The revolution in Russia must develop into a Socialist one, he concludes, and for that it will have two allies, the millions of poor and landless peasants and the workers of other countries, now at last beginning to shake off the effects of the patriotic drug

administered by their leaders, to begin to feel the need to break away from the "bloody lump."

Meanwhile a crisis was being reached in the negotiations with Germany. Robert Grimm, the leader of the Swiss Socialist Party, was trying to make an arrangement which should please equally all Russian groups of political exiles, and Lenin was growing more and more exasperated at the delay. On March 31st he sent a telegram to Grimm saying that the Bolsheviks accepted completely the idea of traveling through Germany, and, rather than brook further delay, would go alone. The negotiations passed into the hands of Fritz Platten, a younger, more sympathetic man, and on April 4th the conditions for making the journey worked out by Lenin were handed in by him to the German Minister in Berne.

The conditions put Platten in absolute charge of the convoy. He alone was to communicate with the German authorities and officials, and was to have the right to forbid entry to the car. The car itself was to be considered as having full extraterritorial rights, and the passengers agreed to agitate for an exchange of German or Austrian prisoners as soon as they reached Russia. There seems little doubt that the German Government agreed to the passage because it hoped that the return of Socialists who were against the war might result in Russia's concluding a separate peace, but that there was any contact between them and Lenin, or any kind of agreement save the vague clause about exchange of prisoners, was completely impossible. The Bolsheviks would even more willingly have returned through France and England, but since the Governments of those countries refused them all help they had no choice but to take the German route. The idea, be it noted, came not from Lenin but from the Menshevik Martov. A few weeks later Martov and some 200 other Russians of all political views followed the same course. That Lenin knew he would be subject to the wildest accusations is certain from the precautions he took to get the approval of foreign Socialists for his step ; in fact he thought that the immediate effect would be that the



whole group would be arrested the moment they crossed the Russian frontier. But better to be in prison in Russia than free in Switzerland. Of lack of courage no one had ever accused him. German, French, Polish, Swiss, Swedish, and Norwegian Socialists signed the declaration of approval, among them Members of Parliament and the Mayor of Stockholm, while Romain Rolland was fully appraised of every step they took, though he could not be present to sign the declaration.

When they heard from Platten that the negotiations were complete they had just two hours in which to break up their home, pack and catch the train for Berne. They succeeded, and left the little room over the restaurant in the mean street for the last time. They walked up the steps to the station at Berne on a bright April morning, Lenin smiling and joking as usual, trying to prevent one of his comrades carrying his luggage, yielding when the latter insisted with a laugh that he was used to physical work—and so into the famous “sealed wagon.”

They were again in the theatre of war, speeding over the grey German fields, faces pressed to the windows to try and read the thoughts of the few women and children they saw in the fields, or on the country stations. No grown men anywhere. Ilyich walked to and fro in the corridor, sometimes deep in thought, sometimes laughing, joking, and singing with the thirty comrades in the car. A short stop at Berlin, then to the coast. A steamer, the little Swedish packet-station, then Stockholm, with the red flag in the waiting-room and the speeches of Swedish Socialists. At the Finnish frontier they had to go in sledges for a short time, and then they were in a Russian train once more, though not yet in Russia. Soldiers crowded the train, among them a little detachment sent by Kerensky to meet the returning *émigrés*. The fear of arrest came back. One of the company cried from the train window to a group of soldiers, “Long live the world revolution !” They looked back silent and puzzled. Ilyich began to argue with the young officer in charge of their escort, who was a stern supporter of the war,

while his men crowded round to listen intently. At Beloo-strov, near Petrograd, crowds of workers gathered to cheer their train, and party comrades came on board to greet them and laugh away the fear of arrest.

Yet the scene at the Finland station was as unforgettable as it was unexpected. On the platform were his comrades, freed from prison and exile, come to greet their leader. Behind them was the flash of bayonets in the station lights, the sense of many people in tense expectancy, the sounds of a great crowd. Lenin stepped from the group of friends to be met by an officer saluting him smartly, by a ringing word of command calling a guard to attention. Outside now he could see the great crowd, the play of searchlights on the red banners, the white faces, here and there the turrets of armoured cars. The orchestras began to play, first the "Marseillaise," sung lustily, then the "International," more feebly, for the workers did not yet know the revolutionary hymn. Then suddenly, says one of the eye-witnesses, there came such a tremendous, moving, heartfelt cheer that Lenin stepped back, astonished, a little disturbed.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The revolutionary workers and sailors are greeting you."

The sailors presented arms; their commander solemnly made his report to the little man in the shabby coat, who still looked at him, not quite understanding. And behind were people, people. Someone whispered to him that the sailors expected him to speak. The grandeur of the moment seized him; he walked along a few paces, took off his cap, and spoke:

"Comrade sailors, I greet you without knowing yet whether or not you believe all the promises of the Provisional Government. But I am convinced that when they talk sweetly to you, when they promise you a lot, they are deceiving you and the whole Russian people. The people needs peace, the people needs bread, the people needs land. And they give you war, hunger, no bread, leave the landlords on the land. . . . We must fight for the social

revolution, fight to the end, until the full victory of the proletariat. Long live the world social revolution ! ”

It was the second time he had spoken openly to a gathering of Russian workers, that they had heard the rather high-pitched, nervous voice. The workers seized him and carried him shoulder high out of the station, stood him on an armoured car, from which again he called a few words of burning greeting, of summons to fresh struggle. On the top of his moving fortress he moved off through the cheering crowds to the Bolshevik headquarters, the mansion of the Tsar's mistress, the dancer Kshesinskaya. The triumph was complete, but the victory was not yet.

That same night, after another short speech to the great crowd around the dancer's house, Lenin went home to his sister's, but not to rest after the emotions of that unforgettable day. He sat late, jotting down the notes of what must now be the policy of the party, the famous theses about which so much controversy was to rage. As he wrote he must have known that he would rouse great opposition, perhaps even drive men like Kamenev out of the party, but he was quite determined, unshakably so since the demonstration of the evening had shown him the revolutionary ardour of the Petrograd workers. It is doubtful if he slept much that night.

The next day there was to be a meeting of the Bolshevik delegates to the All-Russian Conference of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and he would outline his policy to them in a speech of which the theses must be the kernel. There were ten points in all to be made : the first dealing with the war, denouncing the patriots, proving there could be no democratic peace till the power of capital was destroyed ; the second described the situation in Russia ; the third called for the unmasking of the real character of the Provisional Government ; the fourth pointed out that the Bolsheviks formed only a small minority in the Soviets and that they must patiently expose the other parties, while advocating the transfer of all power to the Soviets ; the fifth demanded the arming of the people ; the

sixth called for nationalisation of the land, the confiscation of the big estates, and their conversion into model farms ; the seventh and eighth described the first necessary steps towards Socialism, the nationalisation of the banks, the control of production and distribution by the Soviets. The last two points referred to party policy, the need to change the programme and name, to make a new and revolutionary International.

No report of the speech in which he outlined the theses has survived, but a participator in the meeting luckily retained his notes, and through these jottings one can still feel the remarkable, passionate force of his pleading. The speech lasted for two hours, and it is the most striking, vivid phrases that have found their way into these notes. He speaks on the war with cold common sense mingled with real understanding of the plain soldier, the worker and peasant in uniform. " In view of the apparent existence of a defencist sentiment among the masses who accept the war only as a necessity and not as an excuse for making conquests, we must explain to them thoroughly, persistently, and patiently, that it is impossible to end the war by a non-oppressive peace, unless capital is overthrown. This idea must be broadened and developed to the widest extent. The soldiers demand a concrete answer to the question, how to end the war ? But to tell the people that we can end the war solely through the good intentions of a few individuals is political charlatanism. The masses must be warned. Revolution is a difficult thing. Errors are unavoidable. Our mistake has been that we [have not exposed ?] revolutionary defencism<sup>1</sup> to its very roots. Revolutionary defencism is treason to Socialism. . . . We are no charlatans. We must base ourselves only on the class-consciousness of the masses. Should we even find ourselves in the minority—so be it. It sometimes pays to forgo for a while a position of leadership ; one must not fear to be in the minority. When the masses declare they want no conquests, I believe them.

<sup>1</sup> The idea that to carry on the war against Germany was aiding the Revolution.

When Guchkov and Lvov (Ministers of the Provisional Government) say they want no conquests, they lie. When the worker says he wants to defend his country, it is the instinct of an oppressed man that speaks in him."

No other politician has ever had the insight into the soul of the ordinary man to enable him to make a remark like this last. But the speech is full of such flashes. "The one thing responsible for the failure of all revolutions is the high-sounding phrase, flattery of the revolutionary people." "Learn how to rule; there is no one to stop us. . . . The art of government cannot be gotten out of books. Try, make mistakes, learn how to govern." "Laws are important, not by virtue of their being written on paper, but by virtue of the kind of people that put them into practice." "I hear that in Russia there is a movement towards unity, unity with the defencists. This is a betrayal of Socialism. I think that it is better to stand alone, like Liebknecht: one against one hundred and ten." (The reference is to the one hundred and ten other Socialist Deputies in the Reichstag who voted the war budget.)

The meeting was in a room of the Taurida Palace, where the Soviet held its sessions. On the floor below, the Mensheviks were meeting, and Lenin was asked to repeat the speech to a joint session of Bolshevik and Menshevik delegates. He was listened to with rapt attention, but when he finished there was stormy disagreement. That morning the bourgeois papers had already spoken of "German gold." Plekhanov characterised his speech as "delirium"; others accused him of planting the banner of civil war in the midst of the revolutionary democracy. Hardest of all, many of his own comrades refused to accept his theses. The Bolshevik delegates to the Soviet rejected them by a majority, and Kamenev saw fit to dissociate himself publicly in an article in the *Pravda*.

Lenin did not hesitate to give battle. Stalin, who had only just returned from exile, for a few days had partially supported Kamenev, but as soon as he had heard the theses he came over whole-heartedly to Lenin's side. Afterwards



he confessed that he considered those few days the heaviest mistake of his life. Rapidly the others followed. Some of the intellectuals left the party to join Gorky's paper, *New Life*, which occupied a central position; others, particularly the Moscow leaders, supported Kamenev. At a meeting of members of the Central Committee Lenin fell like a hurricane on Shlyapnikov, who suggested he was in too much of a hurry, that someone should hold him by the coat-tails.

Walking up and down the room, he literally thundered back at his opponent. The Petrograd Conference of the party the next day elected him honorary chairman and accepted his line. On May 7th a conference of the whole party was summoned.

Meanwhile, the Government Press did not cease for a moment its campaign of hate and lies against him. The Socialist Revolutionaries sent their agitators to the regiments to spread the story among the soldiers that Lenin was a German spy, sent specially by Wilhelm to produce confusion. He decided to go himself to the soldiers, and together with Zinoviev went to a meeting of the Ismailovsk Regiment. They went not knowing what to expect. To reach the soldiers they had to pass through a crowd of hostile young officers, each one firmly convinced that Lenin was a traitor and a spy. But the grey mass of soldiers listened attentively as he spoke to them of the real revolution yet to come.

He knew how to appeal to the hearts of the soldiers. The Bolshevik Military Committee had just been formed for agitation in the army, and a meeting was held by them in a workers' district to raise funds for a soldiers' paper, at which Lenin made the appeal. When he finished, from all parts of the hall people began to hand up money, rings, cigarette-cases. A wounded soldier forced his way to the front, climbed on the platform, and, tearing the St. George's Cross from his breast, spoke to Lenin:

"Comrade Lenin, accept from me the reward I got for losing my health at the front. Take this George's Cross, not

as a cross but as a valuable thing which may help to support a paper for the lads at the front ! ”

Those first contacts with the revolutionary soldiers in the Petrograd spring must have meant a further strengthening of his will, created a splendid confidence that he was a thousand times right. Krupskaya, who saw little of him now, would lie awake listening to the endless talk coming in through the open window from the courtyard below. Everyone was arguing, discussing. And it would be foolish to see in it nothing but a Russian delight in aimless words. No, this was a real spring, the awakening to life and consciousness of millions—of soldiers, house-porters, servant girls, tram conductors, factory workers, of all those who had only drudged and obeyed since the world began.

That May Day, the first that was celebrated in freedom, might have been a mere intoxication of fraternal phrases and fine gestures, as undoubtedly the Government and official Socialist parties wished it to be. But it was something very different. That same morning it was known that Miliukov had sent a note to the Allies promising the fullest loyalty in carrying the war through to a victorious conclusion. The result was two demonstrations in Petrograd. Spontaneously, in great streams, the soldiers and workers poured on to the streets, indignantly denouncing the Government, and for the first time the soldiers were heard shouting the Bolshevik slogans against the war, cheering the name of Lenin. And another crowd, well dressed, respectable, with many officers in it, went through the fashionable streets, calling for death to the German spies, cheering the Allies and the Ministers. At places the crowds met, but did not mingle, and blows were exchanged, some shots fired, it is said. Lenin spoke twice to the workers and soldiers, and came home very late, excited and worn out.

He did not know that the efforts he had made to get out of Switzerland had at last attracted the attention of the Allied counter-espionage service, that he had at last won the distinction of a number all to himself in the world's

most exhaustive card index. He did not know that Sir George Buchanan on the day of his arrival had handed in a little note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointing out that "Lenin is a good organiser and an extremely dangerous person, and it is exceedingly likely that he will find numerous followers in Petrograd." But even Sir George Buchanan, with his excellent information from the counter-espionage service, could hardly have expected that he would find followers in so short a time—in exactly two weeks, to be precise. Nor could the counter-espionage inform the Ambassador that it was not only Lenin's dangerous character and organising abilities that won him followers. These merely gave a will and consciousness to the millions driven to revolt by the policy Sir George was upholding by all and every means.

May Day was decisive for Lenin. When the conference of the party met on May 7th, he carried all before him. In two months the party had grown from 23,600 to 79,000. The decisions taken were completely in the spirit of Lenin's famous theses, known now the length and breadth of Russia from the denunciations which had appeared in the bourgeois and Socialist Press. The opposition, led by Kamenev, Rykov, and Nogin, had no supporters save themselves, and in general simply contented themselves with abstention from voting. All power to the Soviets, the land to the peasants, nationalisation of the land and banks, control over the trusts, general obligation to labour—these were the decisions taken by the conference as the immediate aim of the party and the working class. But it was wisely emphasised that they could not be won at once, that much work remained to be done. Chiefly the great grey mass of peasant soldiers must be won over, convinced that the working class alone could rid them of their enemies the landlords, give them peace and land.

The party also, after the most heated argument of the whole conference, adopted a report of Stalin in favour of complete self-determination, including the right to separate, for all subject peoples of the former empire. This was to

prove not the least successful of the many weapons of the party in the coming revolution.

In his speeches to the delegates Lenin again made it quite clear that they must have no illusions as to the difficulties before them, that only hard work in explaining to the most backward of the soldiers and workers, explaining patiently, carefully, and concretely, would win their support. His mind was full of his own recent experiences at the barracks and factories. "Many of us, myself included, have had occasion to address the masses," he reminds them, "particularly the soldiers, and it seems to me that even when everything is explained to them from the point of view of class interests, there is still one thing in our position they cannot fully grasp, namely, in what way we intend to finish the war. . . . There is an absolute lack of understanding as to our point of view, that is why we must be particularly clear."

Lenin had no illusions that it would be possible to introduce Socialism into Russia complete and ready-made. It must be a long process of education and remaking, beginning with only quite small things, but the chief thing must be that the Government is in the hands of the workers; without that even the first, smallest steps cannot be taken. And it must be a Government of a new kind, a real democracy of millions, all taking part in ruling through the practical work of the Soviets. Once again he remembers what he has heard from the workers themselves, using the recollection to clinch the point.

"I shall conclude by referring to a speech that made the strongest impression on me. I heard a coal-miner deliver a remarkable speech. Without using a single bookish word, he told how they had made the revolution. Those miners were not concerned with the question as to whether or not they should have a president. They seized the mine, and the important question to them was how to keep the cables intact so that production might not be interrupted. Then came the question of bread, of which there was a scarcity. And the miners again agreed on the method of obtaining it.

Now this is a real programme of the revolution, not derived from books. This is a real seizure of power locally. Nowhere in Russia has the bourgeoisie assumed such a definite shape as it has in Petrograd. Here the capitalists have the power in their hands. But throughout the country the peasants, without assigning themselves special Socialist tasks, are carrying out purely political measures. It is this programme of the revolutionary movement that indicates, I think, the true path of the revolution. These measures, we hold, must be carried out with the greatest caution and circumspection. But it is only these measures that are really worth while, it is only they that point the way forward ; without them there is no escape."

Three weeks ago he had arrived at the Finland station, with a recommendation as a " dangerous person " from the British Ambassador, unknown by sight to all but a handful of followers, and now he was already talking confidently, though cautiously, of the seizing of power, declaring categorically that though it was wrong now to call " Down with the Provisional Government," it would very shortly be right. He was busy night and day, exercising those organising capabilities mentioned in the Ambassador's note, writing articles, making speeches, drafting resolutions. Yet when he spoke to the grey, anonymous mass of soldiers, what interested him was not the applause he got, but the questions they asked him. He spoke a great deal, not with the passionate fury and fine revolutionary phrases of the lawyer Kerensky, but patiently, explaining, arguing. And he listened as much as he spoke, listened to coal-miners, to soldiers, to obscure Bolshevik agitators fresh from contact with the factories or the ships of the Baltic Fleet. Kerensky and Miliukov listened only to Sir George Buchanan and Monsieur Maurice Paléologue.



## CHAPTER II

### REVOLT

IN THE country the strange position of having two Governments continued. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries now had their representatives in the Provisional Government, but they were also the leaders of the second, popular Government, of the Soviets. While Miliukov and Kerensky negotiated with the Allied ambassadors and intrigued with the General Staff at the front for a continuation of the offensive, the Soviets broadcast appeals to the world for peace. The fact was that the Provisional Government was little more than an agency for the Allied Powers, and the real will of the country was expressed in the Soviets. Yet in both Governments "Socialists" were leading and the Soviets were pledged to support the Provisional Government till such time as the Constituent Assembly should meet to decide the future of the country.

But the workers, soldiers, and peasants in the Soviets considered that the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary Ministers were a guarantee that the Government was working for peace, that it would settle the land question and curb the power of the rich. They were angry that only in June were the hated zemsky nachalniks, village magistrates, the last relic of feudalism, abolished, that the land remained undivided, that many of the employers openly flouted the Soviets and works' councils. At least, however, they thought the Government sincere in its desire for peace, considered that the naïve appeals of the Soviets to the Governments of England, France, and Germany, to stop fighting and renounce their aggressive aims, would be heeded.

At the beginning of June it became perfectly clear that the Government was preparing a fresh offensive. As long ago as March General Alexeyev had promised General Janin, the head of the French military mission, that the army would pass to the offensive in June or July. Mr. Balfour sent a stern message to the effect that export of military materials to Russia must depend entirely on the policy of the Government. From France Monsieur Albert Thomas, from England Mr. Arthur Henderson, arrived to convince the Russian workers that the way to their emancipation lay in giving their lives for the war aims of the Allies and the secret treaties. The Mensheviks passed resolutions against fraternisation at the front and the keeping up of a special armed workers' guard.

Yet it should have been clear that an offensive was impossible. In Kronstadt, where Bolshevik influence was very strong and the sailors' unchallenged leader was the young Bolshevik Raskolnikov, the Soviet had already seized power. The 52nd Regiment mutinied, arrested its officers, and refused to go to the front, while the 1st Machine Gun Regiment marched through the streets, carrying Bolshevik slogans, and liberated the Bolshevik Semashko, imprisoned for anti-militarist propaganda. There were mutinies in the Black Sea Fleet, in the garrison of Sevastopol, while frequent and bitter strikes took place in the factories.

The indignation in Petrograd, particularly among the soldiers, when it was known that the offensive would begin, was unbounded. A meeting of the Petersburg Committee of the party, together with representatives of all the largest factories, was held to consider the organisation of a demonstration of protest. So strong was the feeling that many were for an armed demonstration, but Lenin, patiently as always, convincingly argued that the time for this had not yet come, that though the workers in Petrograd had the support of the garrison and could bravely face the Government, this was not yet so everywhere. The argument went on for hours. Lenin was not satisfied till the last opponent was won over, his doubts cleared away.

Four hundred thousand workers and soldiers poured on to the streets under Bolshevik leadership when the offensive began on July 1st, unarmed but determined, calling for the resignation of the ten Ministers from the capitalist parties, the transfer of power to the Soviets, and the end of the war. Hardly had the excitement of the day passed off than news began to drift through of the defeats at the front, and the uselessness of the sacrifice made the crime of the Government glare in the eyes of the people.

Lenin was worn out with the efforts of the last months. He was persuaded to rest for a few days at a bungalow in the Finnish forests. In his absence the excitement among the more advanced regiments of the garrison, especially the 2nd Machine Gun Regiment, grew apace, fanned by the strike movement of the workers and the discovery of large hoards of food in the bourgeois quarters of the town. On July 15th the ten capitalist Ministers resigned, not on the war question but over the promise of autonomy to the Ukraine. The same night the machine-gunners decided to make an armed demonstration, to call on the Soviet to take power into its own hands, and to overthrow the Government. They sent messages to the Kronstadt sailors, and, for the first time in the history of the Revolution, delegates to the factories. The soldiers were now approaching the workers and not the other way round !

The regiment marched to the Kshesinskaya Mansion, saluted the Bolsheviks, and passed on. Inside there was confusion for a moment, a messenger was sent post-haste to Lenin, while after a hasty discussion it was decided to stop the demonstration if possible, if not, to take the lead and try to organise it so that it might pass off as peacefully as possible.

It was too late. Other regiments had joined the demonstrators. The tenders were busy discharging the Kronstadt sailors on the quays, wrapped round in cartridge belts, seizing automobiles to mount their machine guns. The factories had stopped work and their workers were pouring out, some armed, some not. On the morning of the 17th,

Lenin got back and addressed the demonstrators from the balcony of Kshesinskaya's house, urging restraint, but they hardly listened to him, poured past, intent on reaching the Taurida Palace, on forcing the unwilling and frightened Soviet to seize power.

The demonstration could not succeed. The majority of the Soviet were supporters of the Government, the garrison itself contained many wavering elements, and Kerensky, now Minister of War, was pouring into the city troops who had been well primed with the story that the whole thing was the work of German spies, led by a particularly dangerous criminal called Lenin. The next day there was shooting, the demonstration slowly dispersed, and the reaction began. All its fury was concentrated on the Bolsheviks. They did not dare do more than disarm the machine-gunners and thankfully provide the sailors with transport back to Kronstadt. The same night Lenin went for a few moments to the office of *Pravda* ; he had hardly left when a group of military cadets drove up, overran the premises, burning and destroying all they could lay hands on. The morning of the 19th all the papers appeared with a statement by Alexinsky, a renegade Bolshevik, and Pankratov, a Socialist Revolutionary, that they had definite proof that Lenin was in German pay. The demand for complete suppression of the Bolsheviks and the arrest of their leaders was universal.

Sverdlov begged Lenin to hide, and, unwillingly, he agreed. The same night the order for his arrest was issued and his flat searched. He himself was far away, in the rooms of an old worker and Bolshevik, Alleluyev, whose young daughter was later to marry Stalin. But he would not leave the town or give up the struggle yet. News came that there had been a second military raid on the flat, that Krupskaya, his brother-in-law, and the servant girl had all been arrested and then released. It was clear that the mood of the officers was murderous. Indeed Lenin knew this himself, for when he had gone home for a few minutes on the night of the 17th he had scribbled a note to Kamenev :

"If they do me in, please publish my note-book 'Marxism and the State,' " and added a few hasty directions how the note-book could be got from Stockholm.

A meeting of the Petersburg Committee was hurriedly and secretly called in the watchman's hut at the Renault factory. Should they call a general strike or not? Lenin was against, and his view was adopted. Meanwhile Stalin, Krupskaya, Yakovlev, Ordzhonikidze, Nogin, and Zinoviev had hurriedly gathered at Alleluyev's tenement flat to debate the question of whether or not Lenin should give himself up for trial. Some thought that only by publicly refuting the charges was there a chance of restoring the party's credit. Lenin knew there would be no public trial, and said so. At this point Stasova arrived and told them that all over the Taurida Palace they were discussing rumours that in the department of police they had documents to show that Lenin had been a police agent.

The impression this horrible charge made on him was unforgettable. His face twitched nervously, he could hardly control himself as he announced there was no other alternative but to give himself up. Stalin argued bluntly against him. "The Junkers will never let you get as far as the prison, they'll kill you on the way," he declared. At last the others agreed he was right, and it was decided that Lenin must leave Petrograd with Zinoviev. They saved his life beyond doubt, for in their mood at that moment the officers would certainly have murdered him outright, as a year and a half later they were to murder Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in Berlin.

On the night of July 24th he went with Zinoviev to the house of Yemelyanov, a worker in the Sestroretsk rifle factory, in the country outside Petrograd. Yemelyanov, an old member of the party, lived, like many Russian workers, on a tiny farm, and the two fugitives were hidden in the loft over the stable. Afterwards they left the loft to live in a little hut he made for them out of twigs covered over with hay. Here they remained into the hot August, helping to get in the hay, fishing, playing with the children, but never



for one moment losing touch with what was happening in the great city near by.

The party was now only semi-legal. Many of its leading workers were in prison. Trotsky and Lunacharsky, not yet Bolsheviks but members of a left-wing party that sympathised with them, the so-called "Inter-District" group, also were arrested and imprisoned. The Kshesinskaya Mansion was occupied by Junkers and headquarters were moved to the Viborg district where the workers were strong enough to protect the building and Kerensky's troops dare not interfere. On August 3rd it was known that Lenin was charged with treason and the preparation of armed insurrection. The whole police force of the city was searching for him, even employing dogs for the work, and eventually it was decided he must have escaped abroad.

One optimistic comrade in the Viborg committee of the party declared that Lenin would nevertheless be Prime Minister in September. The remark was overheard and repeated to Lenin in his hut of twigs by Shotman, the connecting link with Petrograd, who thought it the best joke he had heard for a long time. Lenin was sitting on a tree-stump, writing in pencil on a piece of grey paper, and he did not seem in the least surprised, but just answered simply, "Well, there would be nothing wonderful in that." The pamphlet he was writing on the tree-stump was called *Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?* and he was writing it in hiding, at a time when it was unsafe in most parts of Petrograd to declare oneself a Bolshevik, and when even mere sympathisers like Trotsky were in gaol.

On August 8th the sixth congress of the party opened in the Viborg district of Petrograd, but two days later the news that the Provisional Government was preparing a raid forced the delegates to move hastily and continue with a picked few at a secret meeting place near the Putilov works. The situation had greatly changed. Reaction was rampant everywhere and the death penalty had been reintroduced at the front. The Soviets were completely in the hands of the right and bound to the chariot wheels of the Provisional

Government. Already the Allied ambassadors had picked upon the sinister figure of General Kornilov as their hope, and Sir George Buchanan was wiring to Mr. Balfour that the general was "restoring discipline with an iron hand, has ordered a hundred soldiers to be shot . . . and is placing their bodies along the road with inscriptions giving the reason for their execution. He has also shot several captured German officers on whom proclamations with peace propaganda were found." Sir George concluded by saying that Kornilov was going to demand that Petrograd be made part of the war zone.

The "extremely dangerous person" in disguise, whose beard was now shaved off and who was hiding under the roof of hay a few miles from Petrograd, was following all these changes as well as if he had all Sir George's splendid information service at his disposal. He knew that after the July events the whole position had changed, and that the ruler of Russia now was neither the Provisional Government nor the Soviets but the military clique headed by General Kornilov. Sitting on the tree-stump, busily writing with his pencil on the grey, unpleasant paper, he thought out the new position. Till July there had been no force strong enough to oppose the Soviets, power could have passed to them peacefully, without bloodshed, had their Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary leaders only been bold enough to take it. But now this possibility of a peaceful development of the next stage of the revolution had passed, the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" could only mislead the workers. "The present Soviets have failed; they have suffered complete bankruptcy owing to their being dominated by the parties of the S.R.s and Mensheviks. At the present moment these Soviets resemble cattle led to the slaughter, over whose heads the knife has been raised and who are bellowing piteously." The counter-revolution is triumphant; there must be a new revolution, a violent overthrow of the Government by the workers and peasant soldiers, a revolution made also by Soviets, but by Soviets which are not organs of compromise but organs of revolutionary struggle.

The article is finished ; Shotman, the secret courier, is waiting to take it to the Bolshevik Congress. The congress, the first since the famous London meeting of 1907, is led by Stalin, who explains and fights for Lenin's line. He is supported by Sverdlov, the little man with the great voice, the "Yasha" who is worshipped by the miners and metal-workers of the Urals, among whom he worked for so long in the underground days of the Tsar. Sverdlov is the party's greatest organiser and conspirator, but he makes one slip. Referring to the notes and suggestions sent by Lenin, he says : " Comrades, not only is the spirit of Lenin with us, but in a certain way he is taking part in the congress together with us." The ears of the rulers were sharpened by danger, the hint was seized and every newspaper came out with headlines, " Lenin in Petrograd," and the police doubled their watch. The danger to the leader was too great, and it was decided that he must be got away, over the closely guarded frontier, to Finland.

Shotman had to organise the task. At first he hoped that it could be managed by disguising him with a wig, giving him the false papers of a worker at the Sestroretsk factory, and then crossing the frontier in the ordinary way. A reconnaissance of the frontier proved this to be too dangerous, so closely did the Cossacks scrutinise each passenger, comparing them with the photographs. So it was decided that he should cross as a fireman on a locomotive, disguised, of course, but safe from close scrutiny. An engine-driver agreed to substitute Lenin for one of his firemen, and the only difficulty was to get him safely on to the locomotive.

At ten o'clock at night the little group left the hut—Lenin, Zinoviev, Yemelyanov, Shotman, and a Finnish comrade. Their nerves were taut as they crossed the path and struck across country to the railway. They went by a " short cut," but were soon lost in the night, stumbling helplessly through a peat bog—the sharp, keen smell of burning peat in the nostrils, the scented smoke choking the throat. The bog was on fire. As they stumbled along helplessly, Lenin must have recalled that other night in 1907

when he escaped over the frozen sea, almost perishing in the melting ice. His nerves and temper were frayed and he roundly abused his unlucky guides, but at last they heard the distant melancholy scream of an engine and struck the railway. While the others hid behind the embankment, Shotman and Yemelyanov went to reconnoitre the station. As the light came they found the station occupied by ten military cadets, armed to the teeth, who at once interrogated them. Yemelyanov's answers were found unsatisfactory and he was arrested, while Shotman was forced to board the first train to Petrograd alone, separated from the leader entrusted to his care.

He got off at the place where Lenin and Zinoviev were to have stayed the night, had they not lost their way, and to his delight found them already there. They had jumped on the train, from the embankment, while the Junkers were questioning Shotman. Zinoviev went into hiding in Petrograd, and the same night Lenin mounted the engine as the third fireman, and, lustily shovelling logs of wood into the furnace, passed safely into Finland, to Helsingfors, where he found a refuge with the Socialist chief of police.

In the hay-loft, the sylvan hut, and the house of the Helsingfors chief of police he finished his book *State and Revolution*—the precious note-book begun in Switzerland having been safely brought from Stockholm and delivered to him. What a wealth of practical experience those crowded months had given him for a study of "democracy" in its purest form, for the forming of conclusions as to the nature of the proletarian State that would replace the State of capitalist democracy. The little book is a masterpiece of clear thinking, exposition, and bitter polemic. It began in the library at Zürich, in the "democratic prison" of Switzerland. It ends abruptly with a statement that the author must postpone the final chapter on the experiences of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, because "it is more pleasant and useful to live through the experience of a revolution than to write about it." He was then already the head of the Russian Socialist Republic.

Lenin knew quite well that the triumph of counter-revolution would be short-lived. The failure of the offensive, though it temporarily strengthened the reaction, also spelled its doom. The Bolshevik agitators at the front—even before the offensive—at every meeting had questions handed up to them, scribbled with difficulty on little scraps of paper by the soldiers. Some of these pathetic scraps of history have been preserved. “You should tell us, granny,” runs one, evidently addressed to a woman speaker, “when there will be peace, and then we’d say thank you to you and all shout hurrah. But it looks as though you don’t know but I know when peace will be, when the riflemen go for the officers and stab them through.” Another, so simple it cries out with its reality, reads: “Ivan Maslov—I want peace at any price.” A machine-gunner scribbles: “from Mitrophom Romanchuk we want peace peace peace enough of war we all want peace.” Yet another is more threatening of the coming catastrophe: “Why don’t they put out the fire and our blood is paying a great price; they are only putting it out by iron and blood if they don’t put out this fire then very soon we shall look for peace from the bourgeoisie with the bayonet.”

This was the voice and mind of the soldier before the offensive. Afterwards it was a hundred times more insistent in its demand to “put out the fire,” and Kornilov’s executions could only make the elemental, spontaneous demand a conscious and burning hatred of the officers and the Government. The position was indeed a curious one. Kerensky wished to make himself dictator, while Kornilov, with very powerful support, was bent on setting up a military dictatorship with himself at the head; yet neither for the moment dare act without the other. At the end of August the Government summoned the so-called State Conference at Moscow, which it hoped might give a mandate to Kerensky. Kornilov and Alexeyev were both there, and long conversations took place as to the form and moment of the action which was to place the General Staff over the nation. While Plekhanov was declaring before the



conference (to which the Bolshevik delegates were refused admission) that an alliance between the possessing classes and the revolutionary democracy is necessary for both, Kornilov was perfecting his plans. It was decided to surrender Riga to the Germans, in order to create the necessary atmosphere of panic that would call for a strong "saviour," and at the same time orders were given to the 3rd Cavalry Corps to march on Petrograd.

But the general, by exposing himself, killed himself, and not only himself but Kerensky as well. While the Allied ambassadors met hastily under the chairmanship of Sir George Buchanan and advised Kerensky to make concessions to Kornilov, the revolutionary workers and soldiers of Petrograd rose as a man to defend the capital. Kerensky was forced to make a strong show and the troopers of the 3rd Cavalry Corps, mostly Mohammadans from the Caucasus, simply melted away as they approached Petrograd. The Bolsheviks were the heart and soul of the resistance, not, as they explained, because they supported the weak and treacherous Kerensky, but in order to save the revolution.

The collapse of Kornilov's adventure was the great turning-point of the revolution. The Bolsheviks came out into the open again; all over the country they began to win majorities in the local town Soviets, while even in the village Soviets their authority increased. The time was coming, as Lenin wrote to the Central Committee from Helsingfors, to take power, to prepare an insurrection against the feeble Government. On September 30th, without waiting for the permission of his comrades, he returned nearer to Petrograd, hiding at a flat in the Finnish fortress of Viborg. A week later, he came into Petrograd—though still in hiding.

His whole energies were now bent on preparing for an immediate uprising. The Moscow Soviet had elected a Bolshevik majority. In Petrograd, Trotsky, who had joined the Bolsheviks while in prison in August, was elected Chairman of the Soviet and head of the Military Revolutionary

Committee. This latter organisation was, as it were, the legal organisation for revolt. It had all the connections with the regiments and ships, it was officially recognised by the Soviet, and was, with its connections, a real mass organisation, with an energetic and popular leader in Trotsky. But the rising in its secret details, in so far as it was a rising organised by the Bolsheviks, was the work of the Central Committee of the party as a whole, and of its own conspirative Military Committee, whose leader was Stalin. These were all old and tried Bolsheviks—men like Sverdlov, Sokolnikov, Dzerzhinsky, Bubnov.

The elections for the Constituent Assembly were now taking place, and although it was clear the Bolsheviks would get a big vote, it was equally clear that the great peasant mass still remained traditionally faithful to the Socialist Revolutionaries. In the Soviets, however, it was a different matter. They were elected in a much more popular fashion, and the re-elections were taking place, in most cases, after those for the Constituent Assembly. It was clear that the Second Congress of Soviets, when it assembled, would give the Bolsheviks and the left wing of the Socialist Revolutionaries a big majority. When, on October 23rd, Lenin proposed at a meeting of the Central Committee, held in the flat of the Menshevik Sukhanov, whose wife was a Bolshevik sympathiser, that the insurrection should take place immediately, various currents of disagreement had to be fought.

Kamenev and Zinoviev were resolutely opposed to insurrection, considering that the results of the elections to the Assembly should first be waited for, while Lenin, and with him the rest of the Central Committee, as resolutely decided the critical moment had come. The dispute actually led, some days later, to the two dissentients disavowing Lenin and the Central Committee in Gorky's newspaper *New Life*. Lenin was furious, branding the two as deserters. He demanded their immediate expulsion from the party, and it was with difficulty he could be persuaded to withdraw.

How had he decided that this was the moment, and that hesitation now must mean defeat? He himself describes why this was so in the articles he wrote immediately on his return to Petrograd. "Insurrection, to be successful, must not operate on a conspiracy, nor on a party, but on an advanced class. That is the first point. Insurrection must operate on the revolutionary uprising of the people. That is the second. Insurrection must operate on a point critical in the history of the growing revolution in so far as the activity of the advanced ranks of the people is at its highest, and the hesitations in the ranks of the enemies and the weak, half-hearted, indecisive friends of the revolution is strongest. That is the third. . . . But, once these three conditions are present, then to refuse to have anything to do with insurrection is to betray Marxism and betray the revolution."

He sums up the characteristics of successful insurrection from the military point of view: decision, superiority of forces, the offensive, the effort to take the enemy by surprise, boldness—these are the qualities he insists on, and himself provided supremely, while infecting others with them also.

There was nothing secret about the Bolsheviks' intentions. They openly discussed the rising in the Press, at garrison and factory meetings, in the Soviet. Only the hour and the manner remained secret. Yet the military leaders were hesitant. Lenin consulted secretly with the four Bolsheviks at the head of the Petrograd military organisation, and, while they considered that all the fleet and most of the army were behind the party, they were in favour of a short delay. He would not listen. His instinct told him that the moment was now, and, convinced by his conviction, they went away to prepare. Kamenev and Zinoviev surrendered also, and on November 6th he wrote to the Central Committee that the rising must begin the next day. Late that evening he left his hiding-place and came to the new headquarters of the party, the Smolny Institute, a former girls' school. The moment had come.

## CHAPTER III

### BREAD, PEACE, AND LAND

IN THE early hours of the morning of November 7th the armed forces of the Petrograd Soviet moved into position, seizing almost without resistance the post and telegraph offices, the stations, and the Government buildings. In the morning the Winter Palace, the headquarters of the Provisional Government, alone made a show of resistance. The light cruiser *Aurora* from Kronstadt was making her way slowly up the Neva, her guns trained on the palace. In the streets the people were excitedly buying the newspaper *Worker and Soldier*, whose front page contained a proclamation "To the Citizens of Russia."

It was the first document written by Lenin after the revolution. "The Provisional Government is overthrown," it began briefly. "... The cause for which the people have been fighting : the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the abolition of the squires' ownership of the land, workers' control over production, the formation of a Soviet Government—this cause is guaranteed. Long live the revolution of the soldiers, workers, and peasants !" He scribbled it in his bare room in Smolny, where the armed men were going to and fro, where reports of victory were coming in endlessly, the requests for help here, for information there. From there he went to a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet, and as he mounted the platform the *Aurora* was heard opening fire on the Winter Palace, a signal that the last resistance must now collapse before the new power.

As the applause died down and he stood before them to relate in short, hammer-like phrases what had happened, and what was now to be done, it was hard to realise that

very few of those present had ever seen or heard him before, that until that dramatic day in April when he arrived at the Finland station many had not even heard his name. The old Bolsheviks knew him, many of the readers of *Pravda* had read his articles, his enemies knew him, the secret police ; that was all. Some three months in all he had moved freely in Petrograd since his return, and then again he had gone into hiding, to emerge again only a few days before, and then into semi-secrecy. Stalin told of the strange feeling that was created by his first meeting with Lenin after the 1905 revolution. Now thousands were to feel exactly the same.

One of those present has described her impressions of that moment. "A rather short man appeared on the platform. I was struck by his sturdy build, broad shoulders, shaven face. 'So that's what he looks like,' I thought, a little disillusioned. The upper part of his splendidly developed skull completely bald. Reddish hair at the back of his head. A broad, peasant's neck. The skin of his face was a little dull, a rather sickly yellow. In the face with its broad cheek-bones, the quick glance of the small hazel eyes and the large powerful mouth were striking. The whole appearance—stocky, with broad hands—was full of strength, confidence, dignity. I was particularly struck by the sharp glance of his eyes, and especially the very hoarse voice and the rather strangely pleasant inability to pronounce his 'r's.' The peculiarity of Ilyich's voice was in its own way beautiful, and made his speech sound intimate, sincere. . . . In Lenin's whole appearance, in his tense voice, there was felt a striving to pass on to all those present his confidence in victory, his strength of will and decisiveness. I shall never forget the first words I heard him utter :

" 'We are starting on the construction of Socialism,' Ilyich said. The thought settled calmly in the mind, but struck the heart with wings of fire, raised a stormy joy in the spirit. By me a soldier was standing, evidently a peasant, with a long, fair beard. An old greatcoat hung on his shoulders, which he held fastened in a gnarled peasant



hand. The peasant-soldier could not tear his eyes away from the leader of the workers. Big tears ran down his stern face. Perhaps the peasant-soldier heard for the first time in the words of the workers' leader the realisation of the secret hope of an oppressed being—the hope of real deliverance from slavery. Not only this soldier from the trenches, but many others, wept that day."

There was no time, however, for luxury in emotion. Kerensky was beaten, and fled ; the last scared women of the strange garrison of the Winter Palace had surrendered and been disarmed ; the officers and armed cadets had disappeared into hiding. But this did not mean victory. The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened at a quarter to eleven that same night and was solemnly proclaimed the new Government. The handful of right Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks who had been elected walked out demonstratively. Ilyich looked in for a moment, smiled at the emotional scene, and decided to leave it to the orators, Trotsky and Lunacharsky.

He did not sleep that night on the little truckle bed in the bare whitewashed room at Smolny. There was a Government to organise, decrees and speeches to prepare for tomorrow's meeting of the Soviet Congress. The workers and the peasant-soldiers had supported the rising in order to win peace, land, and bread. These they should have. The next morning he read out the new decrees to the assembly. The new Government proposed a peace without annexations or indemnities to all combatant countries, and proposed, further, to begin immediately negotiations along all its own wide-flung fronts in Europe and Asia. The next decree declared the landlords' estates confiscated without compensation, a decree drawn up by the left Socialist Revolutionaries, differing in many ways from the Bolshevik land programme, as Lenin freely admitted.

"Life is the best teacher, and it will show who is right, and may the peasant from one end, and we from the other end, decide that question. Life will compel us to draw together in the general torrent of revolutionary creation,

in the working out of new State forms. We must follow life, we must give full freedom of creation to the popular masses."

Remained the question of bread. The new Government had a small and terribly battered heritage. It determined to divide that heritage justly among the workers and soldiers, excluding those who were guilty of the war and who lived upon the labour of others. No revolution in history had ever so quickly proceeded to fulfil its promises, no leader had ever before so frankly and sincerely spoken to those he led.

At Smolny all was confusion still. Workers came from the factories, some looking for kerosene, others for money to pay wages. They all wanted to see Lenin, and without ceremony passed from one place to another till they found his room and he had satisfied their needs. Meetings went on all day. The city was in a state of alarm ; the defeated dazed, unable to realise what had happened, the victors in confusion, while a few miles outside, at Gachina, Kerensky, safe among his Cossacks, brooded over the ungrateful city which no longer wished to hear his splendid speeches, that was busy now in fulfilling its demand for peace and bread. At night, wishing to send a telegram, Lenin walked to the typists' room, only to find them in a sleep of dead exhaustion, from which it was hard to wake them. He sat down, and himself tried to spell out the message on the machine, but his hands were too clumsy, his mind too tired, and at last, gently and very wearily, he woke up one of the sleeping girls.

The next morning, grey and heavy, heard the sound of fighting in the streets again. The civil servants were on strike and the officers and cadets had risen in the suburbs. From Gachina came the news that Kerensky had arrested the Soviet and was marching on the capital. There was a military leadership, but Lenin's energy was unbreakable, inexhaustible in these days. He himself insisted on knowing every detail of the defence, on giving out the most urgent orders, on putting a hundred searching questions to the tired and sleepless leaders of the Military Committee, till

the harassed nerves of Podvoisky, the chief of them, gave way, and he asked to be relieved of his command. Lenin replied angrily, impatiently :

"I shall hand you over to the party court and we shall shoot you. I order you to continue working and not to hinder me in my work."

And he continued giving his orders to the factories, to the party agitators, to seek for help himself by telephone. The guns in the sheds of the Putilov works, waiting to be sent to the army, must be got into action, the horses of the cabmen requisitioned to drag them to the trench line. Reinforcements had to be obtained from somewhere. He got through to Helsingfors on the trunk line to speak to the leaders of the Finnish army and fleet.

"Can you speak in the name of the regional committee of the army and fleet?" he asked shortly, when at last he was through.

"I can, of course," was the reply.

"Can you immediately send to Petrograd as many destroyers and other armed vessels as possible?"

"I will call the Chairman of the Central Baltic Fleet Committee, as that's a purely naval matter. What's new in Petrograd?"

"There is news that Kerensky's forces have approached and taken Gachina, and, as part of the Petrograd troops are worn out, it's urgently necessary to get swift and strong reinforcements."

"And what else?"

"Instead of the question 'What else?' I expected a statement on your readiness to move and fight." (The impatience is typical, the words those of a soldier, a leader.)

"Yes, we don't need to repeat that. We have declared our decision and consequently will carry it out in practice."

"Do you have reserves of rifles and machine guns, and how many?"

"Here's the Chairman of the Regional Military Committee, Mikhailov. He will tell you about the Finnish army,"

Mikhailov took the line. "How many bayonets do you need?"

"We want as many bayonets as possible, only with trusty people ready to fight decisively. How many such people do you have?"

"About five thousand. We can send you at emergency speed men who will fight."

"In how many hours can we rely on them being in Peter, if they are sent as quickly as possible?"

"In twenty-four hours from now."

Settling the details of the military reinforcements, he turned to the question of ships—which ships could be sent, their armament, supplies, wireless communications, where they must take up position, till the last detail was settled to his satisfaction.

Then, "Good-bye. Greetings."

"Good-bye. Have you finished speaking? What is your name?"

"Lenin."

"Good-bye. We shall proceed to carry out as promised."

He was the heart and soul of the defence. Podvoisky, at first resenting the "interference," soon accepted it gladly as gradually order emerged out of chaos, as the remaining Junkers inside the town were surrounded and disarmed, the trench lines grew, the workers were mobilised, and the lines advanced against Kerensky. The Cossacks reached Tsarskoe Selo at the same time as a wireless call "to everybody, everybody," in Lenin's name, told the people of Russia that Kerensky was overthrown, that the Second Congress of Soviets had elected a new Government and passed decrees on the land and peace. If Kerensky opened fire, the message concluded, may his blood be on his own head. The Cossacks did not fight; the nearer they came to the capital, the clearer it became to them that they were deceived, that there was nothing left to fight for. But the danger was not over. At Orenburg, on the borders of the Kirghiz Steppe, in the Don region, in the Ukraine, the generals and the landlords were gathering their forces; in

Tokio the Japanese war lords were already discussing the seizure of Vladivostok. The future of the young republic could hardly have been darker.

Nor was the internal position better. The opposition parties carried on a bitter, unrelenting, and unhindered campaign in Press and tribune against the new Government. The Committee of the Railwaymen, which had a Menshevik majority, demanded the inclusion of Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries in the Government ; and among the more timid leaders of the party—Kamenev, Zinoviev, Rykov, Nogin—the demand was echoed, though a condition of such collaboration was the exclusion of Lenin and Trotsky from the Government. The strikes of civil servants, teachers, and bank employees were complete, and the hostile Press (only three of the most reactionary newspapers were suppressed) daily incited against the new Government. Certain sections of the railwaymen attempted to sabotage the sending of troops to the front against Kerensky.

Lenin understood perfectly that the aim was to use the armed rising of the Junkers and the advance of Kerensky as a means of forcing the Bolsheviks to agree to a coalition Government of the various Socialist parties and to the setting up of a capitalist parliamentary republic. He refused to yield, flung himself with greater energy into organising the military defeat of the old Government, and, succeeding, snatched away his enemies' strongest weapon. Certain of the Bolshevik Commissars resigned their posts in panic, but the majority of the party held firm ; the negotiations with the railwaymen's committee were abandoned and shamefacedly the deserters returned to their posts.

Lenin had no patience with hesitation or cowardice in times of crisis. His usual good humour vanished ; the icy scorn of his attack became unbearable ; he spoke indigantly and bitterly. In the next two months there were to be many such long and bitter conflicts ; meetings that went on stormily all through the night, while all the time desperate efforts had to be made to establish some sort of order :



an army, functioning departments of the Soviets, to see that the workers were paid and fed. Except to go to meetings, he hardly left Smolny. His secretary would sometimes find him sitting at his desk, completely exhausted, the yellow tinge on his tired face, the eyes dulled, unwilling to make the effort needed even to get to the next room, with its iron bedstead. Yet the next morning he would again be full of energy, joking, his eyes alight, his strength completely renewed.

Two big problems had now to be faced—that of ending the war and that of organising the new Socialist State. On November 20th, General Dukhonin, the new Commander-in-Chief, was ordered to begin negotiations for an armistice. He refused, and a few days later was replaced by Ensign Krylenko, a former student and a Bolshevik, who at once opened negotiations with the German General Staff. On December 3rd the representatives of the two armies met at Brest Litovsk, and on the same day General Dukhonin, who had refused to make peace, was dragged from his train and murdered by sailors. Two days later the armistice was signed. On the 13th the peace negotiations officially opened.

The cessation of the war gave a breathing-space for tackling the enormous problems at home. The few months of Kerensky's Government had brought the country to ruin and famine, while the sabotage of employees and officials, the preparations of the Cossack generals for revolt, were rapidly making things worse. There was no terror at this period. The Ministers of the Provisional Government and two of the leaders of the Junkers' rising were under arrest. The rest of the officers and Junkers, including General Krasnov, Kerensky's military commander, were released on solemn parole, which they promptly broke. The only form of repressive organisation was Room No. 75 in the Smolny Institute, where the Bolshevik literary man, Bonch Bruevich, had charge of the investigation of organisations aiming at overthrowing the Government. He had, however, no organisation himself, and was simply a man at a desk to whom workers and soldiers would come with

information of acts of sabotage and plots against the Government.

For Lenin the most important thing of all had already happened—the old Government of capitalists and landlords was overthrown, and through the Soviets power was now directly in the hands of the workers and poor peasants. So long as they kept that power, nothing could stop them from making Russia the first Socialist State in the world, the only real democracy in existence. He did not imagine this would happen all at once. He saw it going through a variety of stages. First there would be State capitalism, when the workers' State controlled capitalist industry, but, beyond the banks, land, and railways, itself owned none of the means of production. Then a period of gradual development of productive forces and the socialisation of industry. Finally, in ten or fifteen years, when the country had a firm industrial basis and the peasantry a long education in co-operation, there would begin the socialisation of agriculture.

These ideas ran like a red thread through all his speeches and articles immediately before and after the revolution. But again and again he emphasises that such a task can only be accomplished by the workers and poor peasants themselves, by their own enthusiasm and initiative, and that only the Soviet form of State, which completely breaks up the old bureaucracy and all forms of rule from above, can give them the possibility of doing this. He understood clearly enough that the new State would have to fight enemies from within and from without, but he considered that a Communist Party which had come through three revolutions, and the rising tide of revolutionary feeling among the workers in the capitalist States of the West, were guarantees of victory over all enemies.

In that speech to the Petrograd Soviet which he made while the guns of the *Aurora* were still firing, and which so moved his hearers, he outlined the policy which the new power was to put into force, and the speech itself is both a programme of his life work and of the State which he founded :

"First of all, the meaning of this revolution lies in our having a Soviet Government, our own organ of power, without any participation of the bourgeoisie. The oppressed masses themselves are creating this power. The old State apparatus will be smashed to the root and a new apparatus of government will be created in the shape of the Soviet organisations.

"From to-day begins a new era in the history of Russia, and this third Russian revolution must, as its final aim, lead us to the victory of Socialism."

He spoke of the need to end the war, of the friendship of the peasants and their confidence in the workers who drove out the squires and gave them the land, of workers' control over production. Then he concluded by a reference to the party.

"We have that force of mass organisation which will conquer all and lead the proletariat to the world revolution. In Russia we must now occupy ourselves with the construction of a proletarian Socialist State."

The first steps towards fulfilling this programme were taken during the month after November 7th. Workers' control over production was introduced, including the right to nationalise immediately, without compensation, all factories whose owners abandoned production. The eight-hour day and regulation of overtime followed, the setting up of an Economic Council for the planning and control of national economy, the banks were nationalised, Church and State separated, the universities and secondary schools thrown open to all, education secularised, all the property of the Romanov family confiscated, and, finally, all land and minerals declared the property of the State. If the Soviet Government had fallen in two months' time, it would still have done more for its citizens than any other Socialist or democratic Government that ever existed, though not one of its measures could be considered actually Socialist, or even more revolutionary than some of the proposals which most radical or left parties have always carried in their programmes in order to win support, while conveniently forgetting them in office.

Most of the decrees were personally written by Lenin ; all of them were edited by him as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. The most difficult and important of all was that concerning the land. It was drawn up on the basis of the programme of the left Socialist Revolutionaries, but it differed from their policy on the method of carrying it into effect. The decree gave the practical division of land, machinery, and stock into the hands of the Land Committees, while the S.R.s were in favour of doing everything "constitutionally" through the Constituent Assembly, when the latter should meet. In fact, they were more than a little afraid of the Land Committees, on which the poor peasants predominated.

At the end of the month the Congress of Peasant Soviets met in Petrograd. About half the delegates supported the left S.R.s, a small number the Bolsheviks, and about one third were divided between the right S.R.s and the other political groups. They were definitely hostile to the new Government, and on the first day Zinoviev was shouted down. Mr. Bruce Lockhart has described how Lenin spoke to the congress, at first amid shouts of disapproval, then in silence as his calm, simple logic took them prisoner, and finally amid warm approval. His broad face, the reddish beard, the little eyes so shrewdly screwed up, but above all the simple, convincing argument, conquered the hostile, angry crowd.

The peasants want the land, machinery, the abolition of wage labour on other men's farms and estates. Very well, but you can't have that so long as there is capitalism. The land is in bond to Russian and foreign capitalists ; overthrow them, and the land is yours. With regard to the Constituent Assembly, its work will depend on the mood in the country, but "have faith in that mood, only don't forget your rifle." The older men laughed ironically as he related how that day they had replaced General Dukhonin by Second Lieutenant Krylenko as Commander-in-Chief. Laugh, but we mean to fight the generals who are against peace, and if you like to support them, then we are against

you. The scoffers were silent. They knew what the young soldiers in uniform thought about the war. On December 1st, Lenin was able to announce, amid general enthusiasm, that the peasants' Soviets were to be admitted into the Government, and that portfolios would be given to the representatives of the left Socialist Revolutionaries. After that day there was no hope for the reaction. The basis of an agreement between the Bolshevik workmen and the revolutionary peasants had been found.

From Brest, however, the news was bad. The delegation had returned, bringing with them the German proposals for the complete dismemberment of their country. There was little hope of resistance from the demoralised army, but it was still possible that the Allies might accept the Bolshevik proposals to join the peace negotiations and that the situation would be saved. A member of the French Mission, Captain Sadoul, was acting as unofficial intermediary, but he could bring no news of any cheering character. The Allies were determined to prosecute the war to the end, and the Bolsheviks were as determined to make a separate peace with Germany if they could get no support from Britain and France. It was certain, however, that this question of peace or war was going to prove a deadly danger to the revolution, and it was above all necessary to gain time, to have even the smallest breathing-space.

So it was decided that the negotiations must be dragged out at all costs, that the conference table of Brest Litovsk must become a platform from which the Bolsheviks could appeal to the conscience of the world against the armed might of imperialism. Trotsky was selected to head the delegation, as being a debater of the greatest power and revolutionary fire, perhaps the first orator of his time. If Brest was to be a platform, then at least it should be adorned by a splendid presence. Lenin avoided gestures and emotionalism like the plague, while to Trotsky they were meat and drink, the breath of life. Here was the place for them, for it was certain that every gesture, every heroic phrase,



however little power there might be to give them reality, would have its effect on the war-weary peoples of the world.

Trotsky had made his peace with the Bolsheviki from prison in August, when the organisation to which he belonged, the so-called " Inter-District " Party, had united with the Bolsheviki, accepting completely their programme and tactics and abandoning all opposition. It was the first time that Trotsky had submitted himself completely to the will of the party, for ever since the split of 1903 he had played an independent rôle, between the two factions, a position which had particularly laid him open to all the scorn of which Lenin was capable, for he considered nothing more dangerous to the success of a workers' party than such Laodicean ambiguity. Trotsky had many able followers and a very considerable personal influence, due to his position in 1905, when, after the arrest of the Chairman of the Petersburg Soviet, he had boldly stepped into the dangerous succession.

Trotsky had been made a member of the central committee at the sixth congress, and was now People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He had, of course, abandoned his fourteen years of opposition to Bolshevism, and his personal characteristics were bound to bring him prominently forward. His individualism, unfortunately, was not merely a matter of personal idiosyncrasies, vanity or love of power. His whole political life and outlook were coloured by the outlook of those petty-bourgeois elements in Russia whom history had forced into the revolutionary stage. They were bound to come into conflict with the strong collective leadership of the proletarian Bolshevik Party.

So it came about that around the conference table at Brest two world conceptions met for the first time, and through the mouth of Trotsky the outraged bodies of a million dead workers demanded peace, a peace of the peoples against the war-makers. It was known that there were strikes in Germany and Austria, that the soldiers were affected by their contact with the Russian army, and perhaps the miracle would happen, the spark of indignation be kindled

that would flame at last into revolution as the bayonets were turned against the masters. General Hoffmann, surly and jack-booted, who intervened only rarely to show what he thought of it all, was nevertheless disturbed. If this poison was not cleaned out of the social system, then—who knows?—it might end by doing away with capitalist, kaiser, king, and general, just as that damned Jew was hinting.

Hoffmann did not discuss, he did not want to be the butt of Trotsky's wit before the whole world, but he successfully prevented discussion. That was his job—to bring the civilians to heel when they had been talking long enough, to remind these Jewish revolutionaries of who was master, to bring this mad conference down to realities. He did it, and, doing it, lost his Kaiser the throne.

So December ended and January began ; the New Year had been reached and the impossible was still happening, the workers were still in power and Lenin was actually daring to commit the sin of sins—to stop the war for civilisation, to mock the very holy aims of that war by publishing the secret treaties in which the Allied Governments had divided up the world in anticipation. No wonder that President Wilson, bringing America to the trench lines, hastened to declare that the war must not aim at annexations or indemnities, to save the face of democracy that was still blenching from the sudden impure stench of the uncovered treaties.

Civilisation had not exhausted its resources by any means against the impudent challenger. There was General Hoffmann at Brest, who day by day, to the intense satisfaction of those who had gone to war to save the world from militarism, was proving himself a doughty champion of culture, a worthy wielder of the sabre of truth. Then, in Russia itself, it was hoped that at last a force would be found to rally the forces of order against the usurpers. The Constituent Assembly was at last due to meet, and it was certain that its majority would be heavily anti-Bolshevik. Finally, if the Constituent Assembly also failed, then others

besides General Hoffmann knew how to treat mutineers, to bring the rabble to order. French and English generals could roar as loud, or louder, if need be.

The elections to the Assembly had been taking place all through the late autumn, and now the deputies were beginning to assemble in the capital. They had been elected by proportional representation, but history sometimes moves much faster than the most perfect democratic machinery, and by the time the last peasant in the most distant village had marked his cross on the ballot-paper many things had happened. The largest party by far was the Socialist Revolutionary Party, but since the elections the party had split into left and right. In the Assembly the left, though undoubtedly now possessing the confidence of the mass of peasant voters, found itself with only a handful of representatives. The Bolsheviks had easily headed the poll in the big towns, but they were also swamped in the mass of right-wing peasant deputies. The Mensheviks, the old bourgeois parties like the Cadets, had practically disappeared, along with the followers of Kerensky.

The third revolution had taken place, a Government of the Soviets was in power, to which the peasant Soviets had only just sent their representatives, and places had now been found among the People's Commissars for the left Socialist Revolutionaries. In such circumstances, not unnaturally, the members of the Assembly, as they arrived in Petrograd, began to ask themselves what part they must play. The leader of the right Socialist Revolutionaries, Victor Chernov, was at Mogilev, trying apparently to persuade the staff of the army to declare in favour of the Assembly and march on Petrograd. The members themselves understood clearly that although they had the legal right to declare themselves the Government of Russia, such a declaration was a foolish gesture against the real power of the Soviets.

This situation did not make them feel any more conciliatory towards the Bolsheviks. The wildest rumours were flying through hungry Petrograd—that the Allies were in

favour of peace, that the Allies were going to declare war on the Bolsheviks, that there was a revolution in Germany, that the German army was advancing on Petrograd. There was relative order in the capital, little of the demoralised looting and raiding that was soon to take place, but it was rather the quiet before the storm. The year 1918 was here, the Bolsheviks had still miraculously got power, the traitor Lenin was still alive, but to-morrow—who knows?

A hungry student in a military greatcoat came to see Lenin at Smolny, stared wildly at him, and muttered incoherently while Lenin sympathetically asked him to sit down. The boy was not normal; he needed work, food, a scholarship. When the student went out, Ilyich told his secretary to fix him up with these. A minute or two later the wild-eyed youth came back, protesting he hadn't seen Lenin properly, that he must have another interview. A sailor put him out. At the door, where he stood peering at all those who came and went, a pistol he was holding at full cock under his greatcoat went off. He was arrested, and it was discovered that he had meant to kill Lenin, the German spy, the traitor to his people, the devil in human form. Unluckily for his plan, it was just the very plain humanity of that same human form that upset him, something so simple, sane, and balanced in comparison with his own fevered mind. They let him go, since it did not yet seem possible that the enemy should really wish to use such weapons against the revolution.

The enemy, however, had other opinions. This was a hungry, unbalanced student, but he had been incited by what he read every day in the opposition Press, by the mutterings of the assembling deputies, the wild threats of the bands of officers deserting from the front, and the open preparations for counter-revolution in Mogilev, Orenburg, and on the Don. Lenin was fully aware of these things. The student only caused him mild surprise, but behind his unsteady hand and wandering gaze there were more serious enemies. A group of Cadet and S.R. deputies attempted to open the Constituent Assembly by force, so

that it might give a legal covering to the massing of counter-revolutionary troops in the south. They were easily dispersed, but at half past ten the same evening Lenin wrote out a decree ordering the arrest of all the leaders of the Cadet Party as "enemies of the people." The question of whether or not the Assembly should be allowed to meet perplexed him, and long discussions ensued. Finally it was decided that it should open, that it should be asked to approve of the constitution and policy of the Soviet Government, and submit to re-election in accordance with the changed circumstances. In case of refusal, the Assembly must be dispersed. Lenin carefully wrote out his arguments for this line of action, emphasising that the existing Government presented a much higher form of democratic representation than the Assembly, although the latter in turn was certainly an advance on Kerensky's Government. There was some opposition from the right-wing leaders of the Central Committee, but it was quickly overcome, and the Bolshevik fraction adopted Lenin's theses unanimously. They were supported also by the left Socialist Revolutionaries.

On January 18th the Assembly met, and it was at once proposed that it should accept the "Declaration of Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People" which Lenin had written to summarise the gains of the revolution. After a day of stormy debate, of violent denunciation of the Bolsheviks and the revolution, the majority refused. Thereupon Lenin calmly read a statement declaring there was no use in remaining in the Assembly and the Bolsheviks left, followed by the left Socialist Revolutionaries. The rump continued their debates for two days more, till the sailor Dybenko appeared in the hall with a corporal's guard and ordered them to go home. Meekly they obeyed. Cromwell's gesture had been repeated, without the magnificent abuse to which he treated the deputies before dispersing them, but none the less effectively. The Bolshevik tactic had succeeded, and the last Russian parliament had made itself a shameful laughing-stock in the eyes of the people.



The night before, Lenin had sat down at his desk in Smolny, weary, his mind full of the contrasts of the day. In the magnificent Taurida Palace the bourgeois deputies had debated with all the forms and emptiness proper to their calling. Here in Smolny there was noise, rough voices, bare walls, no formality, hardly even a bed to sleep on for the head of the Government, for it was only a few days before that they had remembered to cover the wire netting with a mattress. Till then he had just spread a blanket over it. But something new was coming to life, something the world had never seen before. Slowly, tired to death, he was writing. It had been a depressing, dull, tedious day in the luxurious palace. It was good to be back in simple, lively Smolny again. "There in the old world of bourgeois parliamentarism," he wrote, "the leaders of hostile classes and hostile groups of the bourgeoisie have been *fencing*. Here in the new world of the proletarian-peasant Socialist State, the oppressed classes are crudely, clumsily, making . . ." He stopped, leaving the sentence unfinished, perhaps interrupted by some urgent call of that new-born, lusty child, the proletarian State, perhaps too worn out to continue.

## CHAPTER IV

### “EITHER . . . OR . . .”

AN ECONOMIC commission was working out the first plans for Socialisation. From Petrograd to Moscow hastily mobilised detachments of Red Guards, commanded by picked commissars, were moving out into the country to gather supplies for the starving cities, to protect and see to the removal of the long trains that were piling up on the sidings, full of vital necessities that nobody knew or cared where to send. The bourgeoisie was still going to the cabarets, eating and drinking, applauding the singers and the clowns who satirised for them the idiotic new régime of the working men. Drunken pogroms began to take place in the streets. As Mr. Lockhart relates in his memoirs, young members of the aristocracy, self-demobilised Guards-officers, turned bandit under the name of “anarchist” and held up the cabarets, politely leaving English officers’ watches in their pockets since they felt that they saw in them kindred spirits.

At the front the soldiers were seizing trains, and going home in bands armed to the teeth. Every regiment was split in two, the mass of peasant soldiers who wanted no more of the war, whose only desire was to get back to their native village where the squire’s land was being divided up, and the little groups of officers and N.C.O.s who thought that the greatest betrayal in the history of the world was taking place. Discipline had gone ; the regimental colours had disappeared ; the oath was forgotten ; sometimes the senior officers were shot down. The survivors packed themselves into horse-trucks, hand-grenades in their pockets, a machine gun pointing at the door, the smell of human

sweat, of equipment, of the grey military greatcoats, of oil and dirt, pressing like an iron load on their bursting heads. Every truck carried disease, death, and anarchy back through the silent forests into the waiting country.

At the beginning of December such a train approached the town of Gomel. On to the brake platform of the last truck there stepped a young officer, his head bursting from the darkness and the overheated stench inside. A few months later he wrote down his recollections of that moment :

“The winter night stands over the forest.

“The night is telling of my native forests, of a great love for my country, for the people who live in the forests. The night tells of the terrible trial of our earth, of the danger hanging over it, of the fighting at Kiev, the war between ourselves, the revolution that is perishing in treason. The night tells of everything.

“And I look at the firs, the sky, the lights of the passing villages, as though I am seeing them for the first time.

“Everything is in its place, all has become clear. For the love than which there is none greater will be fulfilled. Like a soldier, I have got the order to die. Because the days have come when one’s life can no longer be one’s own.

“I shall take on myself the greatest thing that a man can take.

“I shall kill Lenin !”

So these romantics from the front reasoned. Military mysticism, the love of their kind for some strikingly perverted individual act, for conspiracy, for violence for its own sake, all that to-day has found its organised expression in Fascism, were coming to birth in that great disintegration. Some of the demoralised ruling class found an outlet for themselves in banditry, drink, and drugs. Others in assassination. Shortly they were to join forces in the volunteer armies, the last organised effort of a dead social system to save itself.

Weak men, men who were uncertain of themselves, would have hesitated before plunging into that seething mass of

demoralised soldiery, discontented peasants, trying to create some order out of the chaos. But the Bolsheviks were sure of themselves, sure of the ability of the class they represented to stem the flood. A couple of divisions, German, English, French, no matter from where, could have taken Petrograd at this time and overthrown the Government. But what could they have put in its place? A military dictator? But a dictator without soldiers cannot rule, and there were no soldiers. The wretched Nicholas? No one even thought of it. Kerensky? Equally impossible.

But in every city there were the factory workers, suddenly conscious that they alone had discipline, had an aim, above all had leaders and an organisation. One army was chaotically demobilising and another army was already forming; a new front was being built up, a very feeble, very disorganised front, yet nevertheless a front; little centres of resistance, shock groups around determined and energetic organisers; here a Bolshevik sailor, here some ex-N.C.O., here one of the commissars from the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee. Volunteers were called for, and the first echelons of a new Socialist army were got together in Petrograd.

The little group of conspirators arrived back from the front. An old Socialist Revolutionary told them how to organise terrorist acts. In a state of abnormal, fevered excitement, they prepared to kill Lenin. The news came from a hanger-on at Smolny that, on the night of January 14th, Lenin was to greet the first echelons of the new army in the Mikhailovsky riding-school before they entrained for the front. The ruins of the old army, the demoralised relics of the Tsar's Empire, decided to make the attempt upon the workers' leader at the meeting in the riding-school of the first battalions of the new workers' army. They spent the whole day in a strange excitement—partly fear, not physical fear, but fear of the strange new Petrograd in which they found themselves, partly the exaltation of the self-appointed assassin.

One of the group, the writer of the narrative quoted

here, forced his way into the school as a scout just as the Commander, sword drawn, called the audience to attention, and a long-drawn fervent “Hurrah” greeted Lenin.

“On the platform, among those unknown people, a man is standing.

“It is he !

“How could I not recognise him at once ?

“Sturdy. Wearing an overcoat. His hands in his pockets.

A cap.

“He stands like a man at whom they are crying ‘Hurrah,’ and who can take no part in that cry.

“He stands great and simple.

“He smiles and waits patiently.

“And the men in the ranks shout and shout ; they don’t want to stop, and draw out their hurrah like a prayer, and the prayer grows, and a spirit of the highest emotion reigns over that mass, and over that man, in the strange, half-lit circus.

“And I hear myself shouting as well. I don’t open my mouth, as I should, so that others might see me shouting, and, thinking no evil, I shout inside myself, because everyone is shouting, because I can’t not shout, because I’ve forgotten everything, because something unrestrainable is breaking inside me, something elemental, obscuring my prejudices and tearing my soul. . . .

“I run nearer the platform, where the Commander is standing and singing the prayer ‘Hurrah.’

“I see quite near to me a kind and simple face ; face and eyes smiling at me, warm with tenderness and love.

“Then they began to wave from the platform for the cheering to cease and the man in the overcoat started to speak.”

The document is authentic, the author now a worker in the Soviet co-operative system, and, though the tone is hysterical, it explains better than a thousand political theses what was happening in Russia. The conspirators waited outside for Lenin’s car to leave—a cold, foggy winter night. As it crossed the bridge the narrator was to



have thrown a hand-grenade, but his heart failed him. The others opened fire, he followed suit, but too late. Fritz Platten, the Swiss Socialist, covered Lenin quickly with his body, his hand deflected a bullet from his head, and they were out of danger. Lenin himself laughed at the incident, two of the gang were arrested, including the writer of the confession, and he insisted that they be given books and released as soon as the affair was cleared up. The bourgeoisie was already broken. It could not even lift its hand to murder without fatal hesitation so great was its inner conflict—for or against the new world coming to birth.

It was this inner weakness of the enemy that allowed the young republic to overcome at this time what was to be the greatest ordeal it would ever have to face—the decision as to peace or war in connection with the proposals for national slavery made by the Germans at Brest. Lenin, with his cool realism, never had any doubt ; the terms, however terrible, must be accepted. But it was otherwise with the majority. It appeared that the experiment of sending Trotsky had been a triumphant victory, that he had secured for the Bolsheviks an overwhelming moral success. Indeed, the German civilians were reduced to stuttering silence. Hoffmann no longer dared open his mouth, while to the rest of the world, groaning beneath the torture of the war, it seemed that the conscience of humanity was speaking out at last.

Lenin knew better. He knew that Hoffmann had confidence in his sword when his mind no longer helped him. He knew that a mere debating victory would not defeat world imperialism, that it could only gain the tiniest but most precious breathing-space. Trotsky, on the other hand, and with him the delegation and the majority of the party leaders, was carried away by the flow of his own words. To sign the peace was impossible ; to fight was impossible. Very well, the worker should go back to his factory, the peasant to his fields ; let the Germans advance if they want, but before that tremendous will to peace, to

work, their war-weary armies will melt away as surely as though they had been decisively beaten in battle. Neither peace nor war !

Lenin opposed this first before a meeting of responsible party workers in Petrograd, in the Smolny Institute. A rumour had gone round that he had prepared an astonishing proposal, and all eyes were turned on him as he came in, joking with two or three comrades who accompanied him. Sverdlov called on him to speak ; his look changed, a shadow passed over his face as he rose. He spoke out bluntly, uncompromisingly : “ I intend proposing the acceptance of the peace terms the Germans are now putting forward.” He did not convince the audience. Only 15 voted with him ; 32 were for starting a revolutionary war on German imperialism ; 16 for Trotsky’s slogan of “ Neither Peace nor War.” In the discussions that followed, in the Central Committee, at a joint meeting with the left Socialist Revolutionaries, at the Third Congress of Soviets, Trotsky’s viewpoint gradually gathered a majority, only three of the more prominent leaders of the party supporting Lenin—Stalin, Sokolnikov and Zinoviev. With a heavy heart he bowed to the decision of the majority, knowing that such a demonstration must be futile and might prove tragic, fatal even to the whole revolution.

For he had followed with his usual minute care the real position at the front. Krylenko, the Commander-in-Chief, had given a report on the condition of the army which left no doubt as to its demoralised condition. The Germans, as soon as their ultimatum expired, began to advance, without meeting resistance. Lenin called together the military Communists and asked their opinions.

“ We must blow up the bridges and disturb the enemy’s rear with cavalry raids,” said the first. Lenin, his overcoat thrown over his shoulders, his cap pushed back on his head, said nothing, but he changed his head from resting on his left hand to his right.

The next proposed the organisation of guerilla bands, as in 1812. Lenin shifted his head gloomily back from the

right hand to the left. Then came the declaration that the issue of leaflets to the German soldiers must be increased. Lenin sighed, shifted his head again, his cap slipped back and exposed his great forehead. Another was going to speak, but he cried out in protest, in his rather high, gruff voice.

"There are seven more speakers," he pointed out, "and, if all speak in the same strain, we shall be just where we were. The question is not how to stop the Germans, because we can't stop them anyhow except by signing the peace. The question is how to save our supplies and munitions."

The next weeks must have been among the heaviest of his life. The party, for the first time on a question of such importance, was against him, and he knew that the results could only be tragic. War and peace—the question filled his whole mind.

"Are you for peace or for carrying on the war?" he asked his secretary one morning as she brought him a telegram.

"I am for peace."

"Why?"

"Just because both under Kerensky and now I've seen how the soldiers are carrying their rifles—as though they're just going to drop out of their hands," she answered.

"And you've observed correctly and drawn the right conclusion," he told her.

Meanwhile the whole question of peace had made the opposition to this Socialist Government more violently unrestrained. "Dictators," "believers in brute force," were the taunts flung at them continually, and especially at Lenin. With the almost homely force which made him so utterly convincing, he answered them during the Third Congress of Soviets. He never forgot the smallest incident, the most trivial conversation, and at times would use them with crushing force to drive home an argument. In the middle of his report on the activities of the Council of Commissars, he told how he had been travelling one day on the Finnish Railway from Petrograd and overheard a conversation between several Finns and an old woman.

“One of the Finns turned to me and said : ‘Do you know what a very original thing this old woman has just said to us ? You don’t need to be afraid of a man with a gun to-day, she says. When I was in the forest a man with a gun met me and instead of taking away my firewood he helped me gather some more.’”

“When I heard that, I said to myself : Let hundreds of newspapers, whatever they call themselves—Socialist, semi-Socialist, and so on—let hundreds of very loud voices shout at us : ‘dictators,’ ‘violators,’ and so on. We know that another voice is now being heard among the masses of the peoples ; they are saying to themselves : To-day we don’t need to be afraid of a man with a gun, because he is defending the toilers and will be merciless in suppressing the rule of the exploiters.”

His mind, his whole being, grasped the essential thing. There was now a Government in power which was of the people, which, given time, would show itself to be also by and for the people—such a Government as had never existed before. But time was vital. “Socialism,” he emphasises again and again at this time, “can’t be ‘introduced,’ can’t be brought to you ready served up on a plate. It is the result of a whole epoch of struggle, a struggle which can only be carried on by such a Government as ours.” And yet the policy which had been adopted had put everything in danger. Day and night he was haunted by this. Unless the peace was signed they were lost. It was not only Germany. A Japanese cruiser had entered the harbour at Vladivostok without permission, its guns trained on the town. There must be peace, another breathing-space.

The armistice had been declared at an end. The Germans had occupied Dvinsk ; Petrograd was in danger. It was the triumph of General Hoffmann ; the revenge of the militarists for the humiliation they had received at the hands of the Bolshevik delegates. The armistice ended on February 16th. The next day the Central Committee still refused to accept Lenin’s proposal. On the 18th, in the

morning there was a majority of one against him. In the evening he had won by one vote. The proposal to accept the terms was wired to the German Government, but the advance continued, grimly, efficiently. Then new and more terrible terms were presented, accepted by a larger majority of the Central Committee, passed, after a stormy session, by the Central Executive of the Soviets, but still the Germans did not stop. The country was paying dearly for the policy of "Neither Peace nor War." In Finland a counter-revolution started, the Germans sent a couple of divisions to support it, and Finland was lost, its workers' Government, constitutionally elected, drowned in blood. It was the price of Trotsky's policy. Had peace been signed in January, Finland would have been saved, the whole Russian revolution would have been spared terrible sacrifices and losses.

The controversy over the signing of the peace was a bitter one. The Socialist Revolutionaries in the Government were absolutely against, and so also were those left Communists who now began to group themselves around Trotsky. There was no one to whom the treaty was a bitterer blow than Lenin, the bitterer because he knew that if his advice had been accepted the worst damage would have been avoided. Stasova remembers how Karakhan brought him the text of the treaty, and started to unfold the great document with its seals and sprawling signatures. Ilyich protested outright :

"What ! You not only want me to sign that foul peace, but also to read it ? No, no, never ! I don't mean to read it, and I don't mean to fulfil it, except as far as I'm forced."

The treaty was never fulfilled. The German armies on the Eastern Front could not withstand the revolutionary atmosphere ; as they were slowly withdrawn, to garrison duty in Germany, to fill the gaps on the West, they carried the poison with them, the nagging, impossible, but unforgettable idea that it could be done, that a man could actually walk right out of the hell of the war and go home. In November 1918 the whole German army gave way, the



second great European revolution took place, and the Brest Treaty was destroyed. Lenin knew it would happen. He was not boasting when he declared he would neither read nor fulfil the treaty.

How hard the struggle had been can be judged from the fact that at the very height of the battle in the Central Committee Lenin declared that if his policy were not accepted he would resign his position in the party and the Government, whereupon Lomov, one of the lefts, jumped up and proposed that the resignation be accepted. Bukharin, in the Press, compared Lenin with Kautsky, calling him a phrasemonger of opportunism. The seventh congress of the party ratified his policy by a large majority, but nevertheless it grew clear that he must have a violent and strong opposition from the left. Riazanov left the party, many resigned their positions, the left Socialist Revolutionaries in a body went out of the Government and into opposition.

The demand for a revolutionary war on German imperialism was strong, and was accompanied by a call for radical measures of nationalisation of the factories, greater freedom of workers' control, equality of income—the whole programme, in fact, of anarchist syndicalism, of Socialism all at once. The left in the party soon found themselves temporarily with more in common with the Socialist Revolutionaries than with Lenin and the majority. Indeed the S.R.s made a secret proposal to them for a *coup d'état*, the arrest of Lenin and the Council of People's Commissars, and the declaration of a revolutionary war on Germany. The proposal was rejected unhesitatingly, but it is at least significant that it could be made at all.

The lefts published their own paper, *The Communist*, in which they outlined their criticism of Lenin. His reply was crushing. These “childish intellectuals,” with their demand for immediate Socialism, their criticisms of “State capitalism,” showed they had no understanding of the realities of the revolution. In Russia, with its overwhelming population of small peasants, capitalism controlled and directed by

the workers' State through a foreign trade monopoly, a corn monopoly, was a great step forward, the first step towards Socialism. Lenin also emphasised the need for learning from the capitalists in the matter of organisation, for co-operation with the highly paid specialists who were willing to work with the new régime. Economically Russia is one of the most backward countries, politically it is the most advanced, he tersely summed up the situation.

Socialism was the aim, but it would come only in measure as that economic backwardness was overcome. At this time, when the first volunteer armies of White officers and wealthy peasants were forming under the protection of German bayonets, when the whole of the Baltic countries, the Ukraine, and the North Caucasus had been torn away by the German invader, Lenin saw that, if what was left was to be retained, a breathing space, however, short, must be won. Inside the narrowing circle of the Soviet frontiers some kind of order and organisation must be restored. In the big towns war was being waged ruthlessly against the demoralised elements of the population, speculators, and bandits, by the newly established Cheka. Fuel was hard to get, there was little food, the houses were cold and ill lit, the streets in the suburbs unsafe, the factories only kept running with the greatest difficulty for a few hours a day. To talk of a war against Germany, of immediate Socialism, in these circumstances was folly, and the overwhelming majority of the party agreed with Lenin that it was folly.

Trotsky accepted the decisions of the party, though not agreeing with them, and was appointed head of the Revolutionary Military Council, now desperately trying to create a new Red army to face the menace gathering on every front. The difficulties once again began to appear overwhelming. The left Socialist Revolutionaries, in sullen opposition, were conspiring against the Government. British and French intelligence officers, men like the notorious Reilly, with the funds of their consulates, were busy fishing in troubled waters, forming conspiracies, plots, and new Governments in the cellars and secret

meeting-places of Moscow and Leningrad. The British Embassy in Petrograd became a refuge for the aristocratic enemies of the new régime, while Allied cruisers and transports steamed to Murmansk, carrying “help” for the Soviet Government against the Germans. The first intervention forces landed ostensibly to evacuate military stores in danger of falling into German hands, but they landed fresh supplies instead of taking away the old ones, pushed steadily down the railway towards Petrograd, and, through their spies and agents, began to form contacts with all the innumerable forces of anarchy opposed to the Government. In May the Czecho-Slovak troops began their armed attack on the Soviets in the Volga region, while at the end of the month the Georgian Mensheviks declared the Caucasus independent of Soviet Russia. By June, bourgeois Governments were in existence also in the Crimea and Siberia, while all communication was cut with Central Asia. It seemed only a matter of weeks now before the end must come.

The Allies hoped it would come in July. Their ambassadors had retired to Vologda to await events. There is no doubt that they had a very clear idea of what they were waiting for. Capable agents, like Reilly and other British and French officers, were busy knitting together the darker strands of the plot, which were to include a rising in Moscow and Petrograd, the arrest and shooting of Lenin and Trotsky, the capture of other leaders. The military heads of the Allies aimed to strike a blow southward and eastward towards Vologda, while at Yaroslavl a committee of Socialist Revolutionaries, ex-officers and monarchists, planned a rising which was to be the signal for a march on Vologda to join forces with the Allies, and thence to Moscow.

The different sections of the conspiracy were far from being co-ordinated, from possessing any unity either of aims or programme. Yet all this motley crowd of officers, diplomats, spies, noblemen, politicians, and intellectuals was united in one thing, all were obsessed by the

personality of Lenin, the leader, the voice and the conscience of the revolution. The picture of this quiet man, with his simple speech and scornful hatred of the world he was so successfully overthrowing, haunted equally Mr. Lockhart in his comfortable and fashionable Moscow flat, Sidney Reilly in the underground dens and secret meeting-places where he drew together the threads of his plot, the ambassadors at Vologda, the demobilised officers and dispossessed squires who slunk from back door to back door of the various Allied missions, the anarchists of the left Socialist Revolutionaries, and the politicians of the right Socialist Revolutionaries, now working actively with the Allied embassies. In Yaroslavl, Boris Savinkov, who under the name of Ropshin had written during the years of reaction after 1905 the great negation of faith of the Russian intellectuals, the novel *That Which Never Was*, was preparing to strike. He too was obsessed with the idea of Lenin, the leader of the workmen's revolution which was actually daring to create "that which never was."

The Bolsheviki were aware of the danger. They knew that they were threatened by not one but a hundred plots, that not one army but a dozen were preparing to strike at them. They knew that everywhere there was hunger and want, that in some places the middle-class peasantry, who now had their coveted land, were beginning to hesitate, even to side openly with counter-revolution. They had big disagreements in their own ranks, but two things gave them unshakable confidence : the support of the working men of the mines and factories—who through all the horror and difficulty never wavered, because they felt that here at last their moment had come, that it was in their hands to build a new world out of this chaos—and then Lenin himself, the tried leader who saw clearly and spoke simply.

It was the practice of the Bolshevik leaders to make frequent visits to the big factories and report on the work of the Government, to discuss its problems face to face with the workers who would have to solve them, and on whom the fate of the Revolution depended. Lenin took his turn with

the others, unguarded, unaccompanied save for his chauffeur. The Cheka implored him to take a guard ; he refused. They gave him one all the same. Like a practised revolutionary, he gave it the slip. Yet there were risings all over the country, in Moscow the White Guards were almost openly consorting with the Allied agents, in the Soviets the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were agitating in the most violent terms against the Bolsheviks and above all against Lenin. In Petrograd they even succeeded in calling a strike among a section of the more backward workers.

Hunger, ruin, and insurrection everywhere. The English at Murmansk, the Japanese at Vladivostok, the Germans in the Ukraine, the Czecho-Slovaks on the Volga. What hope was there ? Only this hope, which Lenin emphasised in every speech, in every letter and article : to defeat the enemy. The hunger and ruin were not the creation of the Bolsheviks, but of the war and Kerensky, made a hundred times worse by the counter-revolution which was rearing its head as the support of foreign bayonets became more open. The new power was in terrible difficulties, but it was a popular power ; if there was suffering it was not the poor who bore the brunt of it, for “ he who does not work, neither shall he eat,” was its corner-stone. Let the Soviets go, let the counter-revolution come to power and there would certainly be food, but for the rich only. For the workers : sixteen hours a day in the munition factories—the front against the Germans for the secret treaties—mass executions, concentration camps. For the peasants : the trenches—the land would go back to the squires—torture, and the firing squad for resistance.

The argument was simple—“ either . . . or . . . ”—but it went home. Better that the hands of the workers and the village poor should build the new world in sweat and agony, in hunger and suffering, than that Nicholas should come back with Allied bayonets to back him. All the demagogy of the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary orators in the Soviets found it hard to prevail against this simple logic.



Not that they did not have their successes. Sometimes in a smaller factory, where the workers were new from the village, the Bolshevik orators met opposition, even blows, sometimes had to fight for their lives.

But in general it was the Menshevik or S.R. who was shouted down, so that as the summer wore on they became desperate. The All-Russian Menshevik Conference declared for an agreement with the Allied armies of intervention. The French Mission in Moscow organised White Guards to send to the front ; the left Socialist Revolutionaries at a secret meeting decided to strike a ringing blow at the Government, to force on a war with Germany with the help of the Allies. On June 20th the Bolshevik leader Volodarsky was shot down in Petrograd, a bomb killed many of the active Moscow Communists at a meeting. On July 6th the left Socialist Revolutionaries murdered the German Ambassador, Count Mirbach, and attempted to seize Moscow and Petrograd. The same day the White Guards seized Yaroslavl.

The conspiracy failed. There was no war with Germany. The revolt was easily crushed in Moscow and Petrograd, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries of both wings were expelled from the Soviets, the Allied ambassadors retreated to Archangel, their plot a failure, the Bolsheviks apparently stronger than ever. On July 16th, Nicholas Romanov and his family were shot, by order of the Ekaterinburg Soviet, to prevent their rescue by the Czecho-Slovaks. It was war to the knife.

The factories were growing idle, but the workers were not. Armed and organised, they began to go out into the country to carry the revolution into the villages, setting up committees of the village poor, seizing the stores of grain hidden by the richer peasants, forming the nucleus of the new Red army. In the factories, in the Soviets, the Bolsheviks argued, explained, exhorted, against the growing danger. There was no capitalist now, no landlord, no fifty millions a day spent on a war for the secret treaties while the masses starved ; the future was in their own hands. Lenin, in

between the innumerable conferences and meetings, the work of legislation, diplomacy, military organisation, went as often as he could to the factories and meetings of the workers. On Friday, August 30th, news was received that Uritsky, head of the Petrograd Cheka, had been murdered. The Moscow Committee at once relieved Ilyich from attending the meetings at which he was to speak that day. He refused to accept the decision.

In the afternoon he went to the Michelson factory across the Moscow river. There was no guard, and he walked straight from the car into the workshop—alone. A short time passed—the singing of the “International” told the waiting chauffeur that the meeting was over—and Lenin came out, surrounded by a crowd of workers with whom he was talking eagerly. As he stepped towards the car, the chauffeur heard him say to a woman at his side: “It’s perfectly true that the provisioning detachments have done many illegal things, but that will certainly be got rid of.” Then, quite suddenly, three shots, and Lenin fell. The crowd ran back in terror, the chauffeur, jumping from the car, revolver in hand, stood in threatening guard over Ilyich, but he could not pick out the assailant in the running crowd. The factory committee ran out, they lifted him up, proposing to take him to the nearest hospital. “I’m taking him to no hospital,” said the chauffeur. “I’m taking him home.” And from the wounded man came a faint whisper, “Home, home.”

They lifted him up; he refused to be carried, and they helped him stumble to the car. In the Kremlin, he insisted once again on walking to his little flat, his face deadly pale, but not a sound of pain escaping him, even when he was bandaged by the surgeons. The wounds were serious, only a man in splendid health could have survived them, but Ilyich was not only in good health, he had a tremendous will to live, to work, to complete what he had begun.

The assailant was a woman, Fanny Kaplan, a Socialist Revolutionary. The same night news came that other attempts had been made. After the failure of the July plot

the enemies of the revolution had taken up new weapons—those of terror, of assassination. On the morning of August 31st, along with the bulletins announcing the attack on Ilyich, proclamations were everywhere posted up declaring war on the terrorists—a Red terror in answer to the White terror. There was no hesitation in striking back, the workers themselves demanded it in thousands of resolutions expressing their anger. The deed seemed to them to sum up the whole situation. At this moment of peril, when all the forces of the old world were trying to crush the new, the attempt to murder the man who more than any other expressed the whole life of the revolution, threw a violent light on the whole terrible struggle. After Fanny Kaplan's shot it was impossible to have any doubts about the revolution. Every man had to decide at once, and finally.

Ilyich's own last words at the meeting in the Michelson factory had been "Victory or death!" and victory or death it was to be. He himself set the example. Anyone else, having received such wounds, would have felt that a month or two would be all too little time for recovering health and strength. But this man felt himself like a soldier on the battlefield, whom no wounds but fatal ones could keep out of the fight before the issue was decided. On September 16th he was once more attending a meeting of the Central Committee of the party, a little paler, a little weaker, but able to laugh heartily at the doctors who wanted to keep him back. Yet the doctors knew, and he himself knew, what it would mean in the end. What of it? Meanwhile there was work to do, danger to be overcome more urgent than the bullet in the neck, after that, let the end come when it would, he would be leaving behind what neither the assassin's bullet nor the hounds of time could destroy.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BATTLE OF NEW AND OLD

THE GOVERNMENT had transferred from Petrograd to Moscow at the beginning of March. From now on, the centre of the revolution became the ancient Kremlin, where Lenin occupied a tiny three-roomed flat in one of the many rambling and inconvenient buildings, among the grave cathedrals and the lofty palaces of the past. Here also was his study, a large and simply furnished room ; the big desk with its telephones, bookcases, maps of the many fronts on which the Red army was fighting for its life. As one of his secretaries afterwards justly remarked, this room was in fact the general head-quarters from which all operations were conducted.

He had struggled for peace as no man before in history had struggled for it, not from sentimental horror of war but because he knew that only peace could save the revolution. Above all they must have a breathing space, however short. He was not against fighting the Germans, provided there was some hope of success, and had over and over again approached the Allies, especially President Wilson, for technical and material help, only to meet with cold rebuffs, the landing of Allied expeditionary forces and the shooting of Bolshevik workers. He had made peace with the Nationalist Government and German occupation forces in the Ukraine, and one of his very first acts, in January of 1918, had been to wire to Antonov-Ovseyenko, the Commander of the Southern front, imploring him to avoid any friction with the Ukrainian Soviets. "This is super-important for State reasons. For the Lord's sake come to an

agreement with them and recognise any and every kind of sovereignty for them."

But all these efforts were vain, for the Soviet Government had attacked the holy of holies, the right of one man to exploit the labour of others, and, having proclaimed as its device "he who does not work, neither shall he eat," it had to expect that it would be proclaimed the enemy of civilisation.

Indeed, Lenin had no illusions. He only wanted time for his Government to organise itself, to produce the minimum of order out of chaos, for the revolution which he knew must develop out of the war in Europe to break out and come to his aid. He saw the future as a long struggle between two worlds, two opposing systems of society, sometimes, perhaps, marked by periods of outward peace, sometimes in open conflict, till the future of mankind was decided in decisive favour of one or the other.

In the summer of 1918 it became clear that the war between the two systems had begun, and that the old world was going to wage a merciless and unrelenting fight with every weapon, including the gallows and the assassin's bullet, against the new. German and English soldiers, who in the West were murdering one another in thousands in the name of democracy, in the East joined forces in the same name against the Soviet Republic. The day before Kaplan shot him down, Lenin had been busy sending urgent telegrams to Muralov, commander of the Moscow district, concerning the organisation of the blowing up of the munition dumps at Kotlas, on the route of the English advance from Murmansk. To Kedrov, commander at Vologda, he wires at the same time complaining that his reports are not detailed enough, that he does not say what fortification works have been done, where the railway is to be destroyed, the exact bridges, viaducts, etc. Just as in the critical days after November 7th he had directly intervened in the defence of Petrograd, to the astonishment and dismay of the professional soldiers, so he now began himself to lead the defence of the whole Republic.



The Red army had begun to form in the spring of the year, at first from voluntary detachments, later as a conscript force. The difficulties that had to be overcome were immense. There were only half a dozen military specialists who could be called upon to help with the experience necessary for the organisation of an army of millions. A great number of junior officers from the old army were willing to help, some of them professionals, others temporary officers from the war. The latter were more sympathetic than the former, but from among both there were found many who took the first opportunity to desert to the enemy. Among these was the adventurer Colonel Muraviev, commander against the Czechs, a man whom Lenin detested personally and to whom he could only bring himself to speak by a big effort.

Of those who were to become the leaders of the new army very few were from the old Tsarist forces, and those were mostly ex-N.C.O.s or subalterns. The army was created by the Bolsheviks themselves, whose most devoted and energetic members, women as well as men, flung themselves into the task of military defence as eagerly and unselfishly as they had worked to overthrow the Tsar. Thousands of Communists, workers like Frunze and Voroshilov, who were later to be the leaders of the new army, or intellectuals like Antonov-Ovseyenko, went to the front as simple soldiers, Red commanders or political commissars.

Factory workers found themselves in a few months commanding divisions; ex-N.C.O.s like Budienny had to create and lead whole armies out of a few scattered detachments and bands of volunteers.

At the head of the Revolutionary Military Council was Trotsky. He had many valuable qualities, will power, energy, the ability to inspire others, a vital personality, but he had all the defects which are fatal to a military leader in modern warfare. He was the creation of the romantic side of the revolution, the elevation of its greatest orator and most biting polemist to the picturesque position of sword of the revolution. At Brest, he had captured the

imagination of the masses, made himself a name throughout the world. His desire for immediate world revolution, without which he was convinced the "backward" Russian worker must fail to build Socialism, his mistrust of the peasant as an ally, are the marks not of the proletarian revolutionist, but of the petty-bourgeois in a hurry.

He had no particular love for the party which he had joined, and no faith that its members could create an army. That could best be done by the loyal military specialists of the old régime, and here it must be said that to Trotsky loyalty was conceived rather in terms of loyalty to himself than to the revolution, since he had gradually come to identify the revolution with himself. His method of organising and commanding was typical. He rushed from front to front, in two special trains, with an immense staff of secretaries, military specialists, translators, wireless operators, telegraphists. He worked out his plans and issued his orders, but with very little concern as to whether the plans were real or the orders could be fulfilled. He himself was inaccessible, the fulfilment of the plans was never checked by individual responsibility from top to bottom. When a defeat occurred, his head full of memories of the French revolutionary wars, mingled with dislike for the Bolshevik military commissars who insisted on methods of warfare which his own specialists rejected, he would send a telegram ordering a dozen old and tried Bolshevik workmen at the front to be shot as an example to the other commissars.

Such methods could not work. There was really no army at all in 1918, and in the beginning of 1919 only an armed horde. Divisions, on paper, consisted of 50,000 or 60,000 bayonets. The effectives were overwhelmed by hordes of camp-followers in the rear. Desertions were frequent; defeat was the common fate in all major engagements. Lenin had more and more to interfere directly in the work of the Military Revolutionary Council. There are letters and telegrams from him innumerable, dealing often with the most detailed and trivial questions such as the supply of field wireless-sets to the front.

Early in 1919, at the eighth congress of the party, the discontent with the work of the Military Revolutionary Council and Trotsky's methods of work came to a head at a secret session devoted to the military situation. It had already been necessary for the Central Committee to intervene to save a number of Bolshevik commissars from being shot, and now the dispute between the old Bolsheviks and their new recruit took on a very sharp form. Almost unanimously the delegates from the front declared that there was no army in the real sense of the word in existence, that the work of the Revolutionary Military Council left everything to be desired. Reinforcements from the centre could never be hoped for, regiments had to be hurriedly found by local initiative and sent straight to the front without any training. Especially was there criticism of the military specialists and their work, though there was also a dangerous tendency to ignore these specialists altogether and to build an army on the guerilla pattern in preference to a regular force.

Trotsky found it better to be absent from the congress, and the chief speakers from the Central Committee were Lenin, Stalin, and Sokolnikov, who declared roundly that there was no regular army and that without it the revolution must perish. From now on, Lenin began to rely chiefly on Stalin in military questions, turning him into a kind of specialist for saving the situation at desperate moments on almost every front. Indeed Stalin himself wrote to Lenin that he was being turned "into a specialist for cleaning the stables of the war department."

Slowly the situation improved, though, in the autumn of 1919, Lenin wrote to his old friend and comrade Gusev, now a member of the Revolutionary Military Council, roundly accusing that body of inertia and wrong methods of work. The letter is so direct, shows such a grasp of the essentials of war, rings so true of the man, that it is worth quoting in full :

"COMRADE GUSEV ! Looking into Sklyansky's letter (on the condition of affairs on the 15 /IX) and the conclusion

according to the summaries of operations, I am convinced that our R.M.C. is working badly.

“To reassure and reassure is bad tactics. It appears like ‘playing at tranquillity.’

“And in fact we’re in a state of inertia—almost collapse.

“You’ve put some swine called Oldenrog and the old woman X<sup>1</sup> on the Siberian front and ‘reassured yourselves.’ It’s downright shameful! And they’ve begun to beat us. We shall make the R.M.C. responsible for that unless you take energetic steps. To let victory slip from our hands is shameful.

“With Marmontov there’s also stagnation. Evidently, there’s delay after delay. You were late with the troops going from the North to Voronezh. You were late with throwing the 21st Division to the South. You were late with the automatic machine guns. You were late with communications. Whether the C.-in-C. went to Orel with you or alone, the job wasn’t done. Communications with Selevachev have not been established, no observation over him has been set up, despite the old and insistent demand of the Central Committee.

“In short, there’s a deadlock with Marmontov, there’s a deadlock with Selevachev (instead of the victories promised in those childish sketches day after day—do you remember showing me those sketches? And I said: ‘You’ve forgotten about the enemy!’).

“If Selevachev runs away or his divisional commanders betray us, the R.M.C. will be to blame, for it slept and was reassured and didn’t do its job. We want better, more energetic commissars sent to the South, and not sleeping tortoises.

“We’re late also with the formation of new troops. We are letting the autumn go and Denikin is trebling his forces, getting tanks, etc., etc. We can’t go on like that. We must change this sleepy rate of working into a lively one.

“Send me a reply (through L. A. Fotieva).

“16/IX. LENIN.

<sup>1</sup> The name is omitted by me—R.F.

“Evidently our R.M.C. is ‘giving orders’ without interesting itself in or wishing to follow up their fulfilment. If that’s our general sin, then in military affairs it’s absolute destruction.”

At this moment of crisis, when Denikin’s cavalry had penetrated the rear of the Red armies and was in the outskirts of Orel, within striking distance of Moscow, he himself wrote the appeal to the party organisations in the factories and the army to save the revolution. “The Soviet Republic is besieged by enemies. It must be a single military camp not in words but in deeds.” His whole life had been given to the idea of building a new human society ; his first acts after November 1917 had been those of social construction, yet he could drop everything, turn his whole intense energy on to the military struggle, and demand of everyone else the same. The whole country, the energies of every Communist must be turned to one end only, the military defeat of the counter-revolution.

The people must be told the truth about Kolchak and Denikin ; of the massacres and tortures carried out by their armies, on women as well as men. The soldiers called to the colours must understand that what they are fighting against is not merely the restoration of Tsarism but something a hundred times worse. The White armies shot deserters. The Communists convinced them that there was something to fight for, and the peasant deserters began to flock back to the ranks in thousands. All work not connected with defence must be abandoned and every Communist take his place at the front. Those elements of the population who are indifferent to the struggle, who talk about the “barbarity” of the Bolsheviks in taking hostages, must be rounded up and set to digging trenches, to helping the work in the rear in every possible way. “Let them get indignant, but war can’t be waged without that.”

The danger was overcome. Once again the Republic had nearly been defeated, beaten down to a desperate struggle and an ever-narrowing circle around Moscow and



Petrograd, while the White armies, with Allied money, Allied uniforms and munitions, Allied officers and tanks, Allied aeroplanes and battleships, were by a last effort driven back in bloody confusion as rapidly as they had advanced. The Red army, with no tanks, with no aeroplanes except a few old machines patched together by the enthusiasm of the mechanics, with no cavalry till the slogan went out, "We must put the revolution on horseback," and the ex-sergeant Budienny raised his first cavalry army at Tsaritsyn, was victorious on every front.

The victory is one of the miracles of history. It was due not only to the courage and self-sacrifice of the hungry, exhausted workmen, but to the hesitation of the peasants in the White armies, to the cowardice and incompetence of their officers, to the unwillingness of the Allied soldiers to fight. It was due also to the vigour and ability of the thousands of Communists who knit the Red army together, giving it a collective will and organisation ; a force, new in military history, which proved that it could get raw recruits to capture tanks with their bare hands and a belt of bombs. Yet among all the factors that brought victory, the most important was Lenin himself. It is said to be a maxim that civilian interference in military affairs is fatal. But it is a maxim that does not apply to revolutions. Cromwell was not a professional soldier but a professional revolutionist. Lincoln, whatever may have been his mistakes, was one of the greatest weapons the Northern armies possessed. Lenin, with his wide grasp and his love of detail, with his iron will and clear vision, was an ideal soldier and organiser of victory.

Peace did not come till the close of 1920. Even so, for another year over many parts of the country there roamed hordes of armed bandits ; while in the Far East, Japanese soldiers occupied Vladivostok and the Maritime Province till the autumn of 1922. The policy of 1918, that of gradual development through stages to Socialism, had proved, in practice, impossible. The system known as Military Communism took its place, with results disastrous for the

economy of the whole country. Even immediately after the revolution of November 1917, factories had been nationalised in cases where the owners engaged in open sabotage of the new régime or joined the counter-revolutionary forces. Lenin set his face sternly against over-hasty nationalisation. He had only one criterion for the delegations of workers who came to him with proposals for taking over factories—"Do you know how to manage the place and keep it running?"

In cases, however, where the hostile action of the owners was proved, he had no hesitation about the confiscation. In December 1917, a delegate from the Ural came to see him with a serious report that the employers' federation of the mines and metal factories was systematically refusing to pay the workers' wages on the grounds that the headquarters of the federation in Petrograd were holding up the transfer of money to the Ural. After a fifteen minutes' conversation with the delegate, Lenin wrote him a note to the necessary authorities that "There is a very sharp crisis in the Ural. You must immediately *arrest* the board of the Ural factories who are *here* in Peter, threatening them with a revolutionary court for creating a crisis in the Ural, and *confiscate* all the Ural factories."

But, with the development of civil war and intervention, the employers as a whole went over openly to the side of counter-revolution, and it was no longer possible to leave the factories and industrial enterprises in their hands, to be used against the revolution. At the end of June 1918, a decree was passed nationalising over 4,000 enterprises. Most of the factories and mines, in so far as they were not occupied by the White armies, continued to function somehow or another for more than a year, but as the war continued, and the agricultural situation became increasingly desperate, one by one they closed down, either because of lack of fuel, or because the majority of their workers were in the army or had drifted back to the villages in search of food.

In the country, free trade in grain was completely forbidden, and the whole of the surplus crops was confiscated

for the use of the towns by the so-called provisioning detachments. In these circumstances, agriculture naturally declined to a minimum, and no measures, however desperate, could make the peasants cultivate the land beyond the bare minimum necessary to keep them alive. The kulak, the well-to-do peasant, sided openly with the White armies, and the allegiance of the great mass of middle-class peasantry began to waver, with a definitely bad effect on the moral of the Red army, composed as it was of an overwhelming peasant majority.

There was no attempt to force Socialism on the peasant farmers, but communism of consumption there definitely was. Money lost all value, though it continued to exist, and in the towns wages began to be paid in rations of food and materials. How came such a system to exist? It was forced on the country by the iron necessity of civil war, by the fact that for the time being the only important problem was that of defeating the enemy who surrounded the young Republic on all sides. The miracle was that the barefoot, hungry, half-naked soldiers continued to fight and win; that despite everything the bulk of the peasantry, though from time to time they wavered, remained faithful to the cause of the Soviets. The workers could offer them no more than a military alliance against the landlords, and a promise of better times after the war. It proved sufficient.

Even in this grim period of starvation, disease, and civil war, Lenin did not give himself up wholly to the military struggle. It seemed difficult, almost impossible, to achieve anything constructive, yet the fact is that from 1919 to 1921 he laid the foundation of the Socialist State that was to afterwards grow up from the desolate ruins of the old Empire of the Tsars. In Switzerland during the war, in the period from February to October of 1917, the problem which had most filled his mind was that of how the workers' State would be organised, the methods which must be used to clear away the wreckage of the old society and lay the foundations of the new.

Lenin detested the modern capitalist State. According

to the Marxian point of view, which he accepted and developed, the State was a definite product of class society, the means by which one class enforced its will on another. The character of the State differed according to the class in power, so that the slave States of Greece and Rome differed from the State of mediæval Europe, the feudal State from capitalist democracy, and so on. The fact that the growth of a vast, educated proletariat compelled the capitalist State to resort to universal suffrage, that in the fight against feudalism the bourgeoisie had been compelled to demand freedom of the Press and speech, in his view did not at all alter the class, oppressive character of the capitalist State.

Its "freedoms" were largely illusory for the propertyless, while universal suffrage, up to a point, only provided a means for clever politicians to delude the masses into thinking their interests were represented. Actually, as every modern politician will acknowledge in the masonic privacy of a gathering of his own kind, the real rulers of every country are the bureaucracy, the weapons they use, the army and police, their spiritual leaders, the "upper ten" of business and finance.

Socialism aims at the eventual abolition of all State forms, at a classless society. The workers' State, the transition to that society, has as its aim the suppression and destruction of the old. It differs from all other States that have preceded it in that it is the rule of the immense majority over the minority, in this sense is not a State at all. This line of thought runs through all the writings, almost every speech of Lenin.

Russia was a peasant country, with a Socialist industry. The peasantry for many years to come must retain their individualist, capitalist tendencies. The new Russian State, therefore, in Lenin's view, was "a workers' State with bureaucratic distortions." To rid the State of those distortions, to make it really a school in which every man and woman might learn the art of administration, became the chief task of the party and working class—the task to which

Lenin bent the best of his energies. The fight against bureaucracy became for him a crusade, the effort to draw the widest possible numbers of men and women, peasants and workers, into the actual work of administration and control, not simply the mechanical operation of periodical voting, became his greatest ambition. He differs from every leader who has preceded him in history by seeing as the aim of mankind, not the perfect administration of the mass by the chosen few, and the consequent enslavement of men to things, their conversion into a mere appendix to an industrial machine, but the fullest control, accounting, and administration of things by the largest possible number of men and women.

There was to be no ruling caste of trained and highly paid bureaucrats, just as there was to be no privileged class of property owners and exploiters. Modern science has made it possible for the control and accounting of society to be run simply and efficiently in a way accessible to all. Only the fact that real power was in the hands of a few prevented this from being the case everywhere. But, in Russia, power was in the hands of the masses, they had the possibility of creating a new life for themselves. "Control," "accounting"—these are the words one finds most frequently in his articles and speeches on Socialism. And even when life was at its lowest ebb, when the revolution, hungry, typhus-ridden, half-frozen, was struggling for life, he waged a bitter war against the twin enemies, red tape and bureaucracy, which he considered as dangerous as the typhus louse and the counter-revolutionary.

Lenin's hatred of bureaucracy can be simply explained. He considered that all forms of soulless administration from above, of "ruling," were marks of class domination, of the old exploiting system the revolution was pledged to destroy. Owing to the semi-feudal character of Tsarism this bureaucratic heritage was even worse than in most capitalist countries. He was determined that in Russia, in the fight against bureaucratic incompetence and tyranny, the scales should be heavily weighted in favour of the individual



worker or peasant. In fighting bureaucracy the worker was actively engaged in educating himself to rule and administer, in rooting out the last traces of the capitalist state.

He did it by ruthlessly carrying through his own ideas of revolutionary justice and administration against all opposition, as well as by the creation of new forms of State activity unknown in any other country. His war on bureaucracy did not neglect the most trifling details, as, for instance, when he wrote one of his curt, direct notes to the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet pointing out that workers had complained to him of the extreme formality of the control on visitors to the Soviet, the writing of innumerable surplus passes. "Can't you simplify this?" he asks. It was simplified. A telegram, dated January 1919, shows him in a white heat of anger. It is to the Kursk Cheka, and runs:

"Immediately arrest Kogan, member of the Kursk Tsentrozakup (a State buying-organisation), for not helping 120 starving Moscow workers and sending them away with empty hands. Publish it in the newspapers and on leaflets, so that all the workers of Tsentrozakup and other supply organs should know that for formal and bureaucratic attitude to their work, for inability to help the starving workers, there will be stern repression, right up to shooting."

Bribery, corruption, the vices of the old capitalist order, he insisted should be repressed with equal sternness, and there is in existence a note of his to Kursky, the Commissar for Justice, complaining that the law on bribery is too mildly formulated and executed. But more important than even this relentless war, which he waged personally on corruption, red tape, and bureaucracy, is his constructive work in creating the really new and distinctive features of the workers' State, in the sphere of mass control and revolutionary justice. It was on Lenin's direct initiative that the Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, the famous "Rabkrin," was formed. Stalin had from the first

been in charge of State control, and it is in a series of notes to him in the spring of 1919, and again in 1920, that Lenin outlines his ideas. The proletarian population, especially women, must be brought into this work, the most backward simply being given the task of listening to complaints, acting as witnesses ; the most developed having the fullest rights of inspection and control. Over and over again he stresses the necessity of drawing women into this work, while finally he urges that it be carried out by means of the party and trade union organisations.

Almost the last act of his life was to dictate a proposal, for the twelfth party congress, on the reorganisation of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection on such lines as would give it the highest possible authority. It was to be combined with the functions of the Central Control Commission of the party, which in turn was to be greatly enlarged to include numbers of active workers and peasants. The two bodies, relying on drawing into their work the widest possible numbers of workers, peasants, and employees, were to form at once the eyes, the ears, and the conscience of the new society. Every complaint of bureaucracy, red tape, inefficiency, petty tyranny, was to be promptly and thoroughly investigated and conclusions drawn "regardless of persons." Members of the Central Control Commission were to attend every meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party, and the principle of criticism "regardless of persons" was to be carried even here, into the most authoritative body in the country.

His hatred of formality and red tape, his desire for a completely new attitude towards the whole complex business of "ruling" and administration, led him personally into frequent conflict with various departments and persons, sometimes over seemingly trivial affairs. For example, in 1920 and 1921 he had to deal with the question of delay in producing Fowler ploughs, the persons in charge of this production having for months done nothing but spend money and write endless reports on the various difficulties they were encountering. Lenin was of opinion a public

example should be made of the guilty. The head of the department concerned, on the grounds that the wretched men were more misguided than vicious, was for dealing with the question departmentally.

Lenin answers with a long letter pointing out the folly of fighting such methods of work otherwise than by the effect of social opinion, and insisting the matter go to court, himself writing out a suggested verdict censuring the persons concerned, but freeing them from punishment, provided they learn seriously the lesson involved.

“Surely, if such an exemplary decision were made, you can’t deny its value—its social importance, a thousand times greater than any private-party-chekist-idiotic suppression without publicity of an affair of disgusting red tape? You are, in principle, super wrong. We don’t know how to try people publicly for disgusting red tape: for that we should all of us, together with the Commissariat of Justice, be doubly hanged on rotten ropes, and I haven’t lost hope that one day they will *deservedly* hang us for that.”

Many of his letters are written in this half serious, half violent tone. In fact nothing irritated him more than formality, red tape, a *stupid* attitude towards one’s work and one’s fellow workers. This was because of his intense consciousness of the great tasks that were to be accomplished; a consciousness that never left him even during the worst days of ruin and civil war. Russia had to become a Socialist country, a country without classes, without the exploitation of one man by another, without the deep antagonism between town and country, physical and mental labour, that characterise capitalist society.

So that even at the worst moments of the struggle, when most of the factories had stopped working, when there was no heat in the houses, no light in the streets, when the workers who were to build the new society were dying of typhus or roaming the countryside in search of food, he could still think of the need for industrialisation, of the methods by which a new world was to be built. In December 1919 he is excited by a report of his old comrade in Siberian

exile, Krzhizhanovsky, on the possibility of utilising the immense peat resources of the country for fuel and electrical power. He urges him to start at once a campaign in the Press to popularise the idea, to call in the engineer Winter, who was ten years later to start the construction of the great dam of Dnieperstroy, and to work out a plan in detail. In the early months of the following year he is eagerly discussing with Krzhizhanovsky the question of the electrification of Russia. The plan must be not only technical but political—that is, it must be advanced as a task for the whole working class. “In ten or twenty years we shall build 20–30 (30–50 ?) stations, to cover the whole country with centres at 400 versts radius.”

Krassin, who was a highly qualified electrical engineer, told him that the electrification of the railways in Russia is impossible. “Is this so ?” he anxiously asks Krzhizhanovsky. “And if it is so, then perhaps it will be possible in five or ten years ? Perhaps it is possible in the Ural ?” It has all proved possible. Mr. Wells, visiting Moscow at this time, seeing the silent streets with the grass sprouting among the cobble-stones, the complete lack of all economic life, the grey desolation, but seeing nothing else, was compelled to write of Lenin as “the dreamer in the Kremlin.” Yet the dream was more than fulfilled in ten years—the minimum period he indicated.

In 1902, almost twenty years before, when he was just starting on the organisation of the party which was to overthrow the Tsar, Lenin had quoted the writer Pisarev : “If man were completely deprived of the ability to dream in this way, if he could never run ahead and mentally conceive in an entire and completed picture the results of the work he is only just commencing, then I cannot imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and fatiguing work in the sphere of art, science, and practical work. . . .” The reader will remember Lenin’s own comment on this : “But of this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement. And those most responsible for this are the ones

who boast of their sober views, their 'closeness' to the 'concrete.' "

The dreamer in the Kremlin was thinking of a Dnieper-stroy while the practical English writer was wondering how the trams were going to start running and the people get a good dinner. But the dreamer proved the more practical, since he not only started the trams and provided the dinner, but also fulfilled the dream.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE END

LENIN was neither indifferent to, nor ignorant of, the hunger and chaos around him. He himself, in December 1919, was held up in the street by armed bandits, who took away his car and his documents. When the gang was rounded up, the leader confessed they had made a great mistake in not taking him with them as a hostage. Afterwards Lenin made good use of the incident by using it in his book, *Left-Wing Communism*, as an example to Mr. Lansbury of what the Bolsheviks consider a necessary and unavoidable compromise.

The period was coming now when the question of compromise and retreat was to prove again a very serious one. The civil war was over, peace signed with Poland, but still the economic condition of the country did not improve ; rather it grew worse. The restoration of industry and agriculture was now an urgent problem that could not be postponed for a moment, yet it was a problem on which there was far from being unity in the Bolshevik ranks. A section of the upper ranks of the party had already, despite Lenin's violent war against it, become thoroughly bureaucratised in the unnatural atmosphere of the war. They were all for "commanding," for running things from above, for a completely militarised industry and agriculture. Their outlook was more than a little affected by the influence of the various specialists from the old régime with whom they were working.

Such methods would have quickly led to a complete and final break between the Government and the masses. All Lenin's ideas of a State which was not a State at all in the

ordinary sense of the term would have disappeared before the rule of a picked bureaucratic autocracy—the Samurai of Mr. Wells's pre-war Utopias. The difference in opinion came to a head in a discussion on the character of the trade unions and their part in industry. Trotsky, with a very large body of supporters, favoured the policy of militarising the unions. Their leaders were to be appointed from above ; they were to be completely absorbed into the State machine, to become bureaucratic administrative organs. Lenin opposed him sharply, calling his point of view the "degeneration of centralism and militarised forms of work into bureaucracy, pig-headedness, departmentalism." Such a mistake, if not acknowledged and corrected, will lead to the fall of the dictatorship of the proletariat, he concluded.

Yet another group, the so-called "Labour Opposition," held the opposite extreme view that the trade unions should absorb the State, the attitude of the American and French syndicalists. Extremes meet, and in substance the "Labour Opposition" and Trotsky would have achieved much the same thing had they been allowed their way. It is easy to-day to see how Trotsky's plan approaches the Fascist idea of corporations, that it is more akin to the most extreme forms of capitalist monopoly than democratic Socialism, but at the time, in the midst of an appalling national catastrophe such as confronted Russia at the end of the civil war, when desperate measures were urgently needed, it was not so easy to see all its implications.

The Bolshevik "Old Guard," Lenin, Stalin, Kalinin, Rudzutak, and others, needed to use all their authority and force of argument to defeat the Trotskyist point of view, defended as it was by Bukharin, Preobrazhensky, and many other men of ability and influence. The position was more than difficult. The famished and exhausted workers were in many places on strike, the food supply from the country had almost dried up, bandits roamed the forests and steppes, the blockade was in full force, even though the war had ended.

In such circumstances Lenin felt bitterly that any kind of discussion was a luxury the party could ill afford. Cases were frequent where workers refused a hearing to Communists at mass meetings, demanding Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary orators, while alarming reports began to come through of big desertions from the Red army to the bandit forces. On February 28th, 1921, news came that in Kronstadt the sailors had held a meeting demanding re-elections to the Soviets, the exclusion of Communists, and the freedom of the Press to other Socialist parties. On March 1st, Kalinin, the head of the Government, had a hostile reception at a great mass meeting of the mutineers, and the sailors made it clear that behind their meeting lay deep discontent with the existing agricultural policy of military Communism.

On March 6th an ultimatum was sent to the mutineers, and on the 8th the fortress was attacked by the Red army. The rising was a failure, but it was a warning. Only a third of the Kronstadt Communists had taken up arms against the mutineers, whose newspapers were full of letters from Communists resigning their party membership.

In these tragic circumstances, with the guns still firing, the tenth congress of the party opened. Three hundred of the delegates went to take part in the final storming of the fortress, and they carried with them a more potent weapon than artillery shells—the decision, on Lenin's initiative, to proceed to the liquidation of military Communism. It was decided to replace the confiscation of surplus grain by a graduated grain tax, and a short time afterwards the transition to the so-called New Economic Policy was completed by the permission of complete freedom of internal trade between town and country.

The New Economic Policy—or *Неп*, as it became popularly called—was a definite retreat from the policy of rapid completion of Socialism through military Communism, as expounded in Bukharin's work, *Economics of the Transition Period*. But it was not the abandonment of Socialism.

Certainly the new policy would mean the rapid growth of capitalist elements in the countryside, the development of a new trading class, but as opposed to that the State would hold in its hands the material basis of Socialism, the factories, railroads, foreign trade. More than ever the future would depend upon the ability of the working class to win the full confidence of the middle-class small peasant farmer, on its ability to persuade him to enter the path of Socialist rather than capitalist development, while waging relentless struggle against the wealthy "Kulak." This was only possible if heavy industry could be built up, if the worker could offer the peasant something more substantial than rolls of cotton cloth, kerosene, and cheap pottery.

"The salvation of Russia," Lenin told the delegates to the fourth congress of the Communist International, "is not merely a good harvest on the peasant farm—that's very little yet—and not only the good condition of light industry which gives the peasantry articles of consumption—that is also very little; *heavy* industry is also essential for us. And to get it into good condition many years of work will be needed. Heavy industry needs State subsidies. If we don't find them, then we, as a civilised State—I don't even say as a Socialist State—are condemned to death."

In Russia, after 1921, as Lenin scribbled in a note to Bukharin at a meeting of the Political Bureau, there is "*capitalism* plus Socialism." The country must now at all costs win for itself a long rest, restore its economy, reconstruct its industry, in order that these capitalist elements might finally give way before the Socialist, the individual farmers be drawn on to the path of Socialist development. How he envisaged that he describes graphically in the last article he was ever to write—or rather to dictate—for by that time he could no longer write.

"Rather less—but better," he called it, and its last part deals prophetically with the future of the State that he had founded, which he already knew must continue its growth without his guidance. He sees that the Versailles Treaty, the Washington Treaty, are going in a few years

to prove that they contain the seeds of terrible new wars, that the questions of China, of relations between the U.S.A. and Japan, between defeated Germany and her conquerors, are going to lead the imperialist nations to battle once again. Russia must try to keep out of this coming conflict, but if she fails, then she will have on her side all the tortured peoples of the East, who see themselves in danger of complete extinction from imperialist greed. If Russia is to save herself, if she is to emerge safely from this coming struggle, and the bulk of the population of the world is to follow her example and declare for Socialism, then she must use the breathing-space to "civilise herself."

He returns again to the question of bureaucracy. The State apparatus must be cleaned of all "excesses," from all relics of the bureaucratic-capitalist apparatus inherited from Tsardom. The leadership of the working class over the peasantry must be preserved and every smallest saving used for the development of heavy industry, electrification. Then he concludes with the words which were to be his heritage, his testament to the people of Russia :

"In this and this alone is our hope. Only then shall we be in a position, speaking figuratively, to jump from one horse on to another—that is, from the wretched, peasant's, yokel's horse, whose economy is reckoned on a ruined peasant country, on to the horse which the proletariat is looking for, and must look for, on to the horse of heavy machine industry, electrification, Volkhovstroy,<sup>1</sup> etc."

The article was not a short one—some twelve pages of printed matter—but in the old days he would have written it at a sitting. Now he took six days to dictate it ; every word had to be forced out by a frightful, mortal effort. On March 2nd, 1923, he looked over the manuscript, made a few corrections, and sent it to the editorial office of *Pravda*. Exactly a week later came the third stroke, which paralysed the whole of his right side and deprived him of the power of speech. He would not believe it, would not accept it,

<sup>1</sup> The first Soviet power station.



continued to struggle for life and speech, yet he must have felt that, however hard he fought, the last battle was very near.

He had never been seriously ill physically in his life. Only from time to time his tremendous mental energy wore him out ; he became nervous, irritable, was compelled to rest. He was proud of his health, jokingly referred to himself as the model of the healthy man, who ate when he was hungry, slept when he was tired. But ever since that August day in 1918 there had been a bullet in his neck ; he had worked as few human beings have ever worked, faced and solved problems that would have appalled most men, written pamphlets, articles, delivered long and serious speeches. The winters had been grim and hungry ones, and it is not astonishing that at the beginning of 1921, after the shock of Kronstadt, the dispute with Trotsky, all the heavy responsibility of the change to the New Economic Policy, he began to feel weak and ill, to understand clearly that he must rest.

He went to the village of Gorky, near Moscow, and the Central Committee of the party forbade the sending to him of any kind of papers whatever. But he would not stay more than a few days. In the spring of 1922 he underwent an operation for the extraction of the bullet in his neck. He went to Gorky to spend his convalescence in the quick beauty of the Russian spring. But the irreparable damage, unseen but deadly, to the fine mechanism of the brain, had been done, and on May 26th the first stroke paralysed his right hand and leg partially deprived him of speech. The great inhuman tragedy had begun, the long torture of the strongest will, the noblest mind of the century, the beating down of the thought that would not die, that struggled in vain for expression, for life. The doctors told him he must not work, must not think. They might as well have told him he must not breathe. If to work and to think meant to die, and not an easy death, then he must die. He had never been afraid of that. . . .

From Plato to Robert Owen the best minds of humanity

had dreamed of a new society, a new attitude to life which should allow man his fullest individual freedom, a development which would give room for him to employ his faculties in endless creation, give him his full status in the world. Hamlet, then, need mourn no longer for "bones that cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with 'em." Their dreams had remained unrealised because only in the last few generations has the domination of man over physical matter reached such a point that the material conditions for such a full life for all exist. Yet, when humanity reached that point, it was confronted with the possibility that the vast majority of men and women must remain slaves to the very machines which human genius had created for the domination of matter. Freedom was the privilege only of a tiny group of millionaires, statesmen, and soldiers. These alone have in fact the power to say, "This thing's to do," and do it. Only a tiny minority can ever hope to do more than sleep and feed, leaving the capability and god-like reason of the mass of men to rust unused in them.

Lenin's work had been to show that this was not inevitable, that neither the oppression of the State nor the domination of the machine need be permanent, that a revolt of the slaves could clear the way for the development of a new life.

Investigators of the Socialist State in Russia have usually given their greatest attention to statistics, to forms of control, to the new kinds of State machinery. These things are important, but the most important thing of all, in Lenin's view, was the people themselves, in whose hands it is to build this new world. Human labour is the most important thing in human history, since man cannot live unless he works, and in the difference between Socialist labour and labour in capitalist countries, between free labour and slave labour, he saw the most important point of difference between the two societies.

The vulgar criticism of Socialism is that it makes for a grey uniformity, that it suppresses all initiative, that it

creates a mechanised man controlled by an impersonal, machine-like State. Lenin's view was that this was in fact an almost exact description of modern capitalist society in its decadent, Fascist, imperialist phase. Only Socialism gives scope to initiative, to freedom of the individual, to emphasising the real, and not the artificial, differences in individuals.

"Socialism not only does not do away with competition," he wrote in January 1918, "but, on the contrary, for the first time creates the possibility of applying it really *widely*, really on a *mass* scale, really drawing the majority of the toilers into the sphere of such work, where they are able to show themselves, to develop their capabilities, find out their talents, which have an inexhaustible source in the people, and which capitalism has held back, suppressed, stifled, in thousands and millions of people." Socialism must not only give the freest development to those talents ; it must aim at making work not a toilsome, unpleasant necessity, but a spontaneous, natural need of every healthy organism.

So when, in the spring of 1919, the workers of the Moscow-Kazan railroad gave up their Saturday holiday in order to help by their own voluntary labour in the repair and reorganisation of the country's disorganised transport, Lenin hailed their act as a "great initiative," and declared that it would prove to have more importance in human history than any of the great battles of the imperialist war. "The dictatorship of the proletariat," he pointed out, "is not merely violence against the exploiters, nor even chiefly violence. The economic foundation of this revolutionary violence, the guarantee of its vitality and success, is the fact that the proletariat represents and realises a higher type of social organisation of labour in comparison with capitalism. That is its essence. That is the source of its power and the guarantee of the inevitable complete victory of Communism."

When the workers everywhere took up with enthusiasm this idea of "Saturdays," as they came to be called, he

himself insisted on taking part. From early morning till dark he trudged in the Kremlin yard, the bullet still in his neck, carrying great baulks of timber. He would not rest until the others, mostly young soldiers, rested, nor would he undertake any lighter kind of work. So, when the first anniversary of the "great initiative" came round, he wrote that: "Communist labour in the narrower and stricter sense of the word is unpaid labour for the use of society, labour undertaken, not for the serving of some definite obligation, not for receiving the right to certain products, not according to already arranged legalised standards, but voluntary labour, labour outside the ordinary, labour given without any thought of reward or condition of reward, labour according to a habit of working for the common good and according to a conscious (already becoming a habit) attitude to the necessity of work for the common good—labour as the demand of a healthy organism. . . . To create a new discipline of labour, to build new forms of social connections between people, to build new forms and modes of drawing people into work, that will be the work of many years and generations."

He knew it would be also a difficult work, which could only be achieved by a violent attack upon the methods and prejudices of the old days of unfree labour, the days when the worker was forced by the weapon of hunger to labour for a master, when the peasant was bound like a slave to his wretched plot of land, wearing out himself and his family in dragging a hard living from the unwilling soil. He was also fully aware that cultured opinion in the Western democracies was against the new Russia, was offended at the thought that the half-starved working men and ignorant peasants of this semi-Asiatic country should claim to be doing what could only be done by an advanced industrial country, with a well-educated working class.

Sukhanov, the Menshevik intellectual in whose flat he had made the last arrangements for the November rising, expressed this point of view in his memoirs of the revolution. Skipping through the heavy volumes, Lenin grimly noted

his comments. "For the creation of Socialism, you say, a degree of civilisation is demanded. Very well. But why could not we first of all create the prerequisites of this civilisation here, by throwing out the landlords and the Russian capitalists, and then already begin the movement to Socialism?"

His outlook was nothing if not international; his Socialism meant nothing to him except as a world doctrine. To him the antagonism between Russia and the Western capitalist States was not a national antagonism at all, but a war to the death between two opposing social systems, in which victory was guaranteed in the end to Socialism, for the very reason that the Socialist revolution had first broken out in a country standing between Europe and Asia, at a time when the war was remorselessly and finally dragging the East into the orbit of capitalist civilisation. The vast majority of the population of the world was therefore concerned as a matter of life and death in the struggle against imperialism, for finding some way out of their terrible position which should save them from centuries of such appalling torture as capitalism represents in colonial countries.

So he believed in world revolution as firmly as he had always believed in the Russian revolution. He thought that it was coming in 1918, when the war-weary soldiers of Central Europe left the trenches and turned their rifles against their rulers. He was prepared to sacrifice everything to help it to success, and twice it looked as though the hungry Russian soldiers might in fact be the means by which Socialism would spread in Europe, as republicanism had been carried on the bayonets of the half-starved, half-naked soldiers of revolutionary France. Early in 1919 the Red armies marched West, occupying again the Baltic lands, driving south and east into Galicia, towards Soviet Hungary and Soviet Bavaria. Red commissars from Budapest flew to Moscow with greetings. Lenin sent radiograms to the Republics of Bavaria and Hungary containing greetings and sound advice. The Communist International was set up



at a meeting of revolutionaries from all countries. When Germany was covered with Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets and the Red army was moving west almost without resistance, Lenin wrote the following note : " We will all die to help the German workers in the cause of the movement forward of the revolution beginning in Germany. Conclusion : (1) Ten times more effort to obtain grain (*all* supplies to be counted both for us and for the *German* workers) ; (2) Ten times bigger registration into the army. An army of three millions must be ready in the *spring* for helping the international workers' revolution."

But the left-wing Revolutionary Socialists of Germany and Hungary were not yet Communists such as years of struggle against the Tsar had created in Russia. The official Socialists of both countries were far more afraid of the working man with a rifle than of the officer with a whip, while in Russia itself the foreign-financed counter-revolution forced the Red armies to withdraw before they had reached the Austro-German frontiers with their much-needed succour. There was no European revolution. Yet Lenin did not for a moment believe that the defeat was final. Capitalism remained capitalism, and, moreover, the war had shown that as a system it was in complete decay, that it could no longer exist except by war and terror, by destroying all that had once been free and progressive in itself. A new wave of revolutions would come, and it was necessary to prepare for it as long and as patiently as he and his comrades had prepared for the struggle with the Tsar and Russian capitalism. While he never doubted that Russia could be made into a Socialist country while still surrounded by capitalist countries, he also knew that this Socialist development could only be finally completed in a Socialist world. He saw the present as a historical epoch whose decisive factor was to be this fight between two social systems, as the last epoch in world history had been characterised by the struggle between dying feudalism and growing capitalism.

So also within Russia itself the two systems must live

side by side for a long time yet, the one continually giving way to the other as the peasantry more and more stood on the path of Socialism. "Learn to trade," he had said in 1921, when Nep was introduced; "learn to trade in order to master capitalism, in order to build Socialism."

"That seems strange, Communism and trade!" he exclaims. "When we conquer on a world scale, we shall, I think, use gold for making public lavatories in the streets of the great cities of the world. That would be the most 'just' and graphically edifying use of gold for those generations which have not forgotten that for gold ten million people were massacred and thirty million crippled in the 'great liberation' war of 1914-18, in the war for the decision of the great question, Which peace was worse, the Brest peace or the Versailles peace? and for the same gold they are no doubt preparing to massacre twenty million people and make cripples out of sixty million in a war maybe about 1925, maybe about 1928, maybe between Japan and America, maybe between England and America, or some such combination."

The world to-day is full of dictators and would-be dictators. A moment's glance at any one of them is sufficient to convince one that Lenin was not such a "dictator." He was a man made in the mould of Lincoln and Cromwell, very simple, very rugged, very great, fully conscious of his own importance in the history of the world, but who never gazed at himself in the mirror of history, never in his life made a false gesture, played at heroics, or spoke hysterically. He had knowledge, intellectual power, vision; the power of swift decision and decisive action; courage beyond the normal; but yet the most striking thing in his whole character is that he was a man like other men. No one could have more detested the idea of a super-man than did Lenin, or more heartily despised the false culture and cheap philosophy that lay behind it. If in the world's history there have been few men his equal, it is only because the great tragedy of that history has been that the talents of man have

been wasted, mocked, suppressed, and vilely extinguished by the ferocity of human society.

In certain circles, in the camp of his enemies, the impression that he was cold, heartless and relentless has grown up. Ruthless and merciless in struggle he certainly could be. His whole life of polemic is proof of this, the stern vigour with which he led the revolution confirms it. Yet it is not explaining Lenin to apply any of these Cæsar-ean adjectives to him. From the moment he began political agitation until his death he fought untiringly against opportunism, that is against bringing into the politics of the working class the ideas and outlook of other classes. His war against the Populists, the long battle with the Mensheviks, the fight with Trotsky's centrism, his violent attacks during the war and after the revolution upon deviators both of the right and the left wing, are the marks of this overwhelming certainty of his that the working class could only achieve its task in history by undeviating adherence to the lessons of its own experience, expressed in terms of revolutionary Marxism.

Perhaps history will eventually record him not as the leader of the Russian Revolution, for that would have happened without Lenin, but as the creator of a new kind of political life, of a new kind of political party. In the Bolshevik Party, which grew up in those struggles and debates which Lenin initiated and led, history created a new factor of immense and world-wide significance. At least there is no doubt that Lenin himself would have desired this above all for his memorial.

He was "old-fashioned" in his life and tastes, loved the classics of literature and music, Beethoven, Tolstoy, Balzac, Dickens—men who perhaps approached his own direct simplicity of outlook, his own intense love of life. Yet he understood perfectly clearly that the younger generation has little respect for the Gods of the old, and he smiled understandingly when the art students whom he visited told him they were for the futurists and "against *Eugene Onegin*," Pushkin's masterpiece.

Few men have ever had his capacity for work, yet he worked always rationally, orderly. He got up usually about nine, read the papers or looked through new books which interested him until eleven, and then began his real work-day : receptions and interviews, consultations on a thousand and one questions concerning the life of the huge country in revolution, meetings of the Government, of the Central Committee of the party, its Political Bureau, articles to write (he did not often dictate, until after his illness), speeches to prepare. Once he had gone into his study he rarely left it before late at night, or, often enough, early in the morning. After the revolution alone his works fill eight large volumes, and here it must be said that few political leaders have ever written so little that was mere words, so little that consisted of covering up an unpleasant truth or evading a direct answer. Every speech, pamphlet, or article consists of hard, crystal-clear thought on problems that would have appalled nine-tenths of the world's statesmen. The style, like the thought, is hard and clear, simple and direct, full of plain, almost homely, similes, of mother-wit, and almost proverbial humour. For words as words he had no use. They were for him a means of expressing thoughts, of arranging facts.

A man full of energy, loving nature and children, with a sharp humour and a simple manner ; a man who could be impulsive, whose temperament was nervous and highly strung, though controlled by an indomitable will and courage ; a man with none of the affectations and all the marks of genius, who could love and was loved intensely ; he made a new landmark in the history of our race : the philosopher who was a leader of men, the leader of men who was a lover of men, the lover of men who loathed the hypocrisy and cruelty of the exploitation and torment of the many by the few.

. . . . .

The first stroke had come in May 1922. It became clear afterwards that the disease—hardening of the arteries that

feed the brain—was much more advanced than any physical signs gave evidence of, though those who worked closely to him, his wife, his secretaries, had often noticed with secret alarm the terrible, completely exhausted look that came into his face from time to time after a particularly exhausting day. In October, he had come back to work, and on November 20th made his last public appearance with a speech on internal and foreign policy at the Moscow Soviet. But the brain was already irreparably damaged. When the post-mortem was made, the doctors marvelled, not at the quantity of work he had done, but that any man had been able to work at all in such a condition.

His wife tells us that two days before his death she was reading to him Jack London's tale, *Love of Life*. "In a wilderness of ice, where no human being had set foot, a sick man, dying of hunger, is making for the harbour of a big river. His strength is giving out, he cannot walk but keeps slipping, and beside him there slides a wolf—also dying of hunger. There is a fight between them; the man wins. Half dead, half demented, he reaches his goal. That tale greatly pleased Ilyich."

He did not really believe that disease would beat him. On December 16th, 1922, the second stroke paralysed his right arm and leg. A few days later he called his secretary, dictated some letters, and gave her a list of books he needed. In the spring of 1923 he is busy preparing the articles which form his testament, his political heritage. He works more slowly, dictating for an hour or two a day, but the grasp is as firm, the thought as clear as ever. On May 9th, 1923, the third stroke deprived him of speech, and he was carried to the village of Gorky to begin that long and awful struggle with the wolf of death.

What he thought of while lying there helpless, what scenes and memories passed through his mind, we can only guess. But there was no loss of hope; there was a last tremendous conflict, a fight for life such as few men have ever made. He was in his beloved Russian countryside, amid the meadows and forests, among the sights and sounds of which



fortune had so long deprived him. As the summer wore on it looked as though he were winning. His speech came back, his paralysis grew better. On October 19th he passed a few hours in Moscow. In January 1924 his eyes began to trouble him, but to the oculist he seemed well and full of courage. At 6.50 on the morning of January 21st, a fourth and last stroke killed him.

The winter was a severe one. Great fires in the Moscow streets were lit to warm the crowds who passed through in endless procession to say farewell to him. They were a strange funeral pyre against the frozen background and the quiet, ever-moving crowds. From January 23rd to the 27th, the procession through the great hall of the House of the Trade Unions never ceased—workers, peasants, professors, engineers, Russians, Germans, Uzbeks, Chinese, every race and every nation. At nine in the morning on January 27th his comrades carried his body from the hall to the Red Square, to the Mausoleum under the Kremlin wall. For the first time in history a man at his death was mourned in every country of the world.



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